



This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

- + *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.
- + *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.
- + *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.
- + *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at <http://books.google.com/>

NYPL RESEARCH LIBRARIES



3 3433 07481289 6

CYCLES IN MAINE

Martha Baker Dunn

CICERO IN MAINE

And Other Essays

Aut. no. A
11-27-09
92

CICERO IN MAINE

And Other Essays

BY

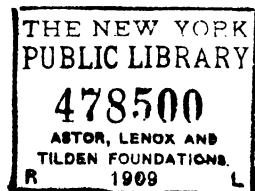
MARTHA BAKER DUNN



BOSTON AND NEW YORK
HOUGHTON, MIFFLIN AND COMPANY

The Riverside Press, Cambridge

1905



COPYRIGHT, 1909, BY MARTHA EAKER DUNN

ALL RIGHTS RESERVED

Published September 1909

CONTENTS

	PAGE
I. Cicero in Maine	I
II. A Plea for the Shiftless Reader	29
III. The Meditations of an Ex-School-Commit- tee Woman	53
IV. Piazza Philosophy	87
V. The Browning Tonic	121
VI. The Book and the Place	153
VII. Concerning Temperance and Judgment to come	191
VIII. Book-Dusting Time	223
IX. Education	251

Transfer from Circ. Dept. *Muhlberg Branch* NOV 26 1909

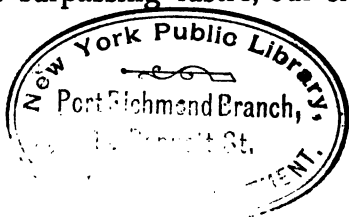
I
CICERO IN MAINE

PROPERTY OF THE
CITY OF NEW YORK.

CICERO IN MAINE

WHEN I was a girl attending the high school, — a *when* that opens the gateway into a magic land of youth, — we were fortunate enough to have a teacher who was, as I heard a college youth phrase it the other day, “dead stuck on Latin.” It was not simply that this gifted man had a passion for Latin literature, but he was, or seemed so to our youthful imaginations, besotted with the grammar of the language. No degree of proficiency or distinction to which we could attain in the matter of fluent translations was ever allowed to excuse us from the daily collection of gems of knowledge from Andrews and Stoddard’s Latin Grammar. born 1848
(so, about '63)

The class of which I was a member was a small but unique aggregation. Our teacher had high hopes of classical triumphs for us because, though our intellectual gifts might not be of surpassing lustre, our critical fac-



ulties were abnormally developed. The heroic degree of discipline which enabled the immortal Light Brigade to feel that it was

Theirs not to make reply,
Theirs not to reason why,

would have found no favor in our ranks. The most uncouth lad in the class, the least hopeful of success in polite literary attainments, was the very one, it seems to me now, who oftenest voiced our united conclusions most clearly.

"If we ain't to ask questions, and ain't to say what we think, what *are* we goin' to do?" he queried; and one and all felt that to such a question there could be but one reply: we *were* to ask questions, we were to say what we thought,—for what else were we in school?

To this method of pursuing our researches our teacher had no objection provided we kept within reasonable bounds, and he had his own way of setting the limits.

"Ain't we ever goin' to git through studyin' grammar?" inquired the aforementioned awkward lad, after months of hope deferred.

"If Mr. Brown thinks he has learned all

the grammar has to impart, perhaps he will kindly give us a little information about its contents," the teacher suggested blandly; and then followed a terrible ten minutes for Mr. Brown, during which every vestige of his fancied familiarity with Andrews and Stoddard fled from his grasp.

The victim sat down at last baffled, perspiring, but by no means entirely vanquished; no sooner was he seated than his hand began to wave frantically aloft, signaling the fact that he had yet a Parthian arrow to dispatch.

"Obstupui, steteruntque comae, et vox faucibus haesit,"

he quoted in a quavering voice from yesterday's lesson, while we looked at him open-mouthed at such erudition. "When I'm all badgered up so, I know a good deal more 'n I 'pear to be able to tell."

"It would seem so, Mr. Brown, it would seem so," the teacher assented with a darkling glance which warned the rest of us of sorrow to come, "and therein you differ from some of your classmates, who are often able to tell more than they can know."

It was owing to this lively, though shallow, intelligence of ours, and the facility with which we engrafted pagan Rome on Puritan New England, that our instructor was encouraged to jump us from Cæsar to Virgil with no intervening stages. To him, as to Mr. Cooper, the commentator whose notes assisted our studies, the reading of Virgil was a joy of which one could not partake too soon or too copiously. He expected us to become rapturously interested in the progress of the story, to enjoy with him the favorite passages which he rolled out sonorously for our benefit; mouth-filling lines like

Exoritur clamorque virum clangorque tubarum,
or the softer modulations of

Sunt lachrymae rerum et mentem mortalia tangunt.

Alas, how grievously we disappointed the good man's hopes! Virgil's poetic genius appealed to us little more than Milton's *Paradise Lost* would appeal to a primer class suddenly plunged into its mysteries. Even when we translated most glibly we were like creatures

Moving about in worlds not realised.

The virtues of the pious Æneas were of a variety not mentioned in our Sunday-school lessons; we held his seamanship very cheap; we had reasons of our own for doubting the authenticity of the whole Trojan legend.

"How did they ever *git* to Troy?" our class orator inquired dubiously. "There wan't one in the whole lot 't knew any more 'bout navigation 'n a fly in a pan o' milk!" This was after we had learned from Mr. Cooper's preface to Book I that our friend Æneas had already been roaming the seas for seven years before presenting himself for the pleasure of our acquaintance.

From the first we had no use for Dido. Love was an emotion which had been mentioned in our hearing, and there were boys and girls among our number who "went together," and displayed varying degrees of what we called "softness" in so doing; but that any human creature could be soft enough deliberately to toast herself upon a funeral pile, simply because another human creature sailed away and left her, was beyond our wildest conception of the tender passion.

The uncouth lad, who frequently wrote notes for general circulation among the girls of the class, issued the following as soon as Dido's funereal intentions were announced:—

"Pass this On.

"Dido was a Fool; how'd she know but Eneeus would be Blowed back by the first Wind?"

Some of the boys who were studying Greek originated a sort of class chant, and the school-room for a time resounded during play hours with the ringing notes of

Dido, Dido, died ou' doors!

As a result of such callousness to all the tender and lofty emotions, we were at last transferred to Cicero, and here, for the first time, we touched solid ground. We lived in an age when treason and traitors were matters of recent history, and philippics were something we were very familiar with, albeit under a different name.

The class lyric, by an easy transition, blossomed into

We 'll hang old Cat'line to a sour apple tree, and without a dissenting voice we took the great orator to our homes and hearts.

The teacher, when he discerned our enthusiasm, and heard the uncouth lad vociferating genially, "He 's jest givin' it to the old Cat to-day, ain't he?" heaved a sigh, perhaps, over the incomprehensible vagaries of pupils, and wisely addressed himself to making the most of the situation.

One Saturday forenoon he brought Rufus Choate's "Eloquence of Revolutionary Periods," and read us what a great American orator had to say about the genius of Cicero. Splendid words they were, these vibrating sentences of Choate's, and as we listened our eyes shone and our hearts beat: —

"From that purer eloquence, from that nobler orator, the great trial of fire and blood through which the spirit of Rome was passing had burned and purged away all things light, all things gross; the purple robe, the superb attitude and action, the splendid commonplaces of a festal rhetoric, are all laid by; the ungraceful, occasional vanity of adulation,

the elaborate speech of the abundant, happy mind at its ease, all disappear; and instead, what directness, what plainness, what rapidity, what fire, what abnegation of himself, what disdain, what hate of the usurper and the usurpation, what grand, swelling sentiments, what fine raptures of liberty roll and revel there!"

On the next declamation day, as soon as the class orator mounted the platform, we realized by the light in his dark eyes that he had something new to offer us. There never was a more moving speaker than our class orator. No matter how many times he declaimed Virginius, — and, owing to many pressing engagements which swallowed up his time for learning new "pieces," this happened with tolerable frequency, — with that slow, deliberate, musical accent he captured his audience. At every repetition,

Over the Alban mountains the light of morning broke,
as if it were for us a new birth; when, at the
critical moment,

Virginius caught the whittle up and hid it in his gown,

we greeted its disappearance with the same shuddering breath; and the "hoarse, changed voice" in which he spake, "Farewell, sweet child, farewell!" never lost its magic for tears.

On this well-remembered day, however, the sorrows of Virginius were forgotten; it was Rufus Choate's magnificent version of a representative passage of Cicero's oratory that fell upon our charmed ears, and we listened to the swelling tones of the speaker with that quickened, thrilling breath which marks the hearer who has surrendered himself to the emotion of the moment.

"Lay hold on this opportunity of our salvation, conscript fathers — by the immortal gods I conjure you! — and remember that you are the foremost men here, in the council chamber of the whole earth. Give one sign to the Roman people that even now as they pledge their valor, so you pledge your wisdom to the crisis of the state," — thus the appeal opened. It was the ageless cry for liberty, the cry that is the same yesterday, to-day, and forever.

"Born to glory and to liberty, let us hold

these distinctions fast, or let us greatly die!" — these are words that belong to every century and to every race of men. We did not know how to formulate what we felt, but it was a moment when Bull Run and Gettysburg, that worn face of Abraham Lincoln, and all the unmarked graves on Southern battlefields confused themselves within us in some indefinable passion, and took hold on the heroic memories of ancient Rome, — a moment when, as in all the high impulses of life, the barriers of time and place were melted away.

I believe, as I look back now, that our first conscious inspiration toward what was best in literature and noblest in statesmanship took root from that time. We were living in strenuous days of reconstruction after a great war, and the air was still full of battle echoes, but we drank in the influences of the hour as unheedingly as a plant drinks the sunshine and the dew; it needed this breath from ancient Rome to shape the cumulative forces within us into the beginnings of American citizenship.

No healthy young creature realizes the process of his own growth, but many of us can vaguely remember the period when

those first affections

Those shadowy recollections,
Which, be they what they may,
Are yet the fountain light of all our day,
Are yet a master light of all our seeing,

first reminded our bodies of the souls that dwelt mysteriously within. We received that reminder noisily or undemonstratively according to our varying temperaments, but in each one of us, none the less, life marked the hour when a new epoch began.

The regular daily session of the school closed at half-past four in the afternoon, but from that time until five o'clock a dark-faced, sweet-voiced woman, with what seemed to us a marvelous twist to her tongue, gave instruction in French to the ambitious few who aspired to a knowledge of that polished language. There was the girl who learned easily and forgot everything, the girl who learned ploddingly and forgot nothing, and another, still, who seems to me now the far-

thrust away of all, although there are buoyant hours when her once overflowing youth and bounding vitality return to her pulses like the resurrection of a lost joy.

Of the three male members — for the class was a well-balanced one — the class orator and the uncouth lad constituted two, and the third was the genius of the school, the only scholar, perhaps, whose intuitions leaped unerringly to the goal, who saw a subject whole, and wrested the inwardness from it while the rest of us were laboriously pondering its earliest developments. Just why the uncouth lad elected to study the French language I could not then comprehend, though I have often told myself that the mere recollection of his recitations added a distinct flavor to life.

He himself accounted for his presence in the class by the statement that “as he took care o’ the schoolhouse he might’s well be recitin’ French as doin’ nothin’, seein’ as he’d got to stay anyway;” and to behold the vital interest which he displayed in the sugar and spice of the grocer, or the mahogany table of the cabinet-maker, was only one degree less

joy-inspiring than when he announced, giving to each syllable its full value, "Jay lese belles pantou-flees de ma bellemare," or clothed himself gayly in the ribbons of his father-in-law.

It was when the French recitation had ended, however, and the old brick schoolhouse was left to our undisturbed possession, that we sat around the great sheet-iron stove, with no light but the red blur of the setting sun through the western windows, and told all things that ever we knew. On one Tuesday afternoon in particular, I remember, the talk began with that tale of the celebrated wooden horse which Virgil makes Æneas tell as a sort of after-dinner story in the second book of the Æneid. Our teacher, always hoping against hope that he might some day interest us in his beloved Virgil, had that afternoon been dwelling on the great poet's talent as a raconteur.

It is needless to say that we rejected the whole narrative as puerile. The school genius, indeed, made some modifying reflections in regard to the primitiveness of the age in

which the deception was located. "I s'pose we ought to consider" — he began deprecatingly, but the uncouth lad brusquely interrupted, —

"We ain't got to consider nothin'," he declared, "except that the' wan't any last one of 'em 't had any more head 'n a carpet tack."

"A wooden hoss," the class orator sneered, taking up the theme; "poh! 't would n't fool a baby. My little brother had one for a Christmas present, an' 't would n't go into his stockin', so mother took an' hitched it on with a string."

"I 'll bait ye, sir," the uncouth lad declaimed oratorically, "that we couldn't 'a' fooled the rebels with any wooden hoss when we was tryin' to take Richmond. If they'd seen us drawin' off an' leavin' any such contrivance round to hitch to their stockin', they'd said, 'No, thank ye. We ain't keepin' Christmas this year, an' if we was, the Yankees ain't no Santy Claus.'"

"What do you think," asked the girl who was quick to learn, "of the man that came into school to-day?" It was a part of her

adaptability that she knew how to change a subject in season to prevent it from growing threadbare.

We lived within two miles of the State capitol, and in all the high moments of life we felt ourselves enhaloed by the shadow of its dome. The State legislature was in session, and our visitor that day had been one of the members of this august body. Our generation was much less sophisticated than the present up-to-date class of young people, and for us very simple things frequently assumed heroic proportions. To our admiring eyes this visitor was not a mere country lawyer, with that taste for the literature of Latin which many country lawyers used to possess, — he was a wise and powerful being, who created laws out of his inner consciousness, and hobnobbed with principalities and powers, and we venerated him accordingly. The teacher had informed him of our intimacy with Cicero, and when, at the close of the recitation, the great man “addressed” us, he had the acumen to leave the ordinary platitudes unsaid, and draw from the Roman

orator's life and words the message of that nobler patriotism, that larger citizenship, whose ideal forever appeals to ardent souls with the thrill of a passion for which men have been content to die.

When the girl who was quick to learn recalled our visitor to our minds the thrill came back too, and our eyes turned toward the red streamers in the darkening west, as if they were the banners of victory beckoning us on.

"Le's go up to the legislature to-morrow," the slow girl suddenly suggested, seized by an unwonted inspiration; and with one accord we assented, for Wednesday afternoon would be a holiday.

When, next day, we met at the appointed hour for our long walk, the afternoon seemed to have been created for our purpose. It was one of those clear, bracing winter days when the snowy path echoes crisply under one's tread, and snow and sky melt into a dazzle, whose blended light and color is emphasized by the dark shapes of feathery pine and fir trees.

It must not be thought that our little com-

pany dallied along in couples absorbed in any sentimental discourse. On the contrary, we marched by threes, the boys leading the way, the girls briskly keeping pace. The road which we followed was then, and to me is to this day, filled with childhood memories of "the war," and it was of these things that we discoursed as we went along. That commonplace-looking, hip-roofed farmhouse had been the military pesthouse, and awesome associations lingered around it still ; in yonder field a battery had once encamped, and one of the girls related the story of how, at the venturesome age of twelve, she, with several companions of equally mature years, having wandered within the limits of the camp, had been promptly arrested and haled before the commanding officer, the terrors of whose cross-examination had been little mitigated by roars of laughter from surrounding listeners. The echoes of marching infantry and the beating hoofs of cavalry horses seemed to us hardly to have died from the air, and when we reached the State House at last we were keyed for heroic doings.

The capitol building of our native State was to us, in those days, the grandest structure in the world. I confess here that it has never lost its ancient charm for me. It stands on high ground, and I have seen its dome blur grandly into many sunrises and sunsets; when one begins to mount the successive flights of broad, granite steps that lead to the majestic front entrance, one begins to say to one's "inward ear," "Here is a centre of deeds; here events are shaped for good or ill;" and the fact that many of these shapings are trivial in themselves — sometimes, indeed, ill-shaped — does not altogether rob them of their significance in the eternal framework of things.

As we entered the rotunda that day, our footsteps resounding on the floor seemed almost an impertinence. We lingered to look at the portraits of the old-time governors in their gay coats; we paused in sincere homage before the clustering battle-flags, which were then being gathered into the State House as their last, honored resting-place. A copy of Moses Owen's stirring poem, "The Returned

Maine Battle-Flags," hung beside the sacred relics, and the class orator could not resist the opportunity to thrill us with its music. As he read he forgot himself and the place, and more than one hurrying foot checked itself at the sound, as if a sentinel had called "Halt!"

As the word is given — they charge ! they form !
And the dim hall rings with the battle's storm !
And once again through the smoke and strife
Those colors lead to a nation's life.

After numerous digressions we reached the gallery of the House of Representatives, and hung over the rail gazing at the mighty men below. The triviality of the subjects under discussion might, had we been maturer auditors, have served to dampen our heroic mood, but to us it was all mysteriously large and significant. When two honorable members chanced to indulge in lively recrimination, the uncouth lad was observed to murmur as in meditation, "How long, O Catiline," — the familiar phrase which had become to us like a household word.

Once during the afternoon a large, blond young man, with a cherubic visage, rose in

answer to a question, and drawled forth a reply which commanded the instant and amused attention of the house.

"That's Tom Reed," we heard somebody say, and we looked with quickened interest at a speaker who had already begun to make himself felt as a power.

By and by there was a stir in the rear of the great hall as loitering men in the corridor greeted a fresh comer. Now Cicero was indeed among us! We all knew that erect form, with the head gallantly thrown back, and the keen, dark eyes that had not then learned to question Fate otherwise than blithely, — the eyes that had ever a smile of quick recognition, as we well knew, for every boy and girl to whom their glance had been directed. It was little wonder that we all loved Mr. Blaine, — there was much about him that was supremely lovable.

The usual routine of a visit to the State House included the climbing of the winding stairs which led to the cupola, to assure ourselves that Kennebec County remained securely anchored below; but, on this occasion,

as the short winter afternoon was waning fast, we contented ourselves with a visit to the massive stone balcony which opens from the second story. A tinge of rosy light was already reflected in the eastern sky, and a few ambitious stars had begun to show themselves. In front of us lay the "State grounds," which had so lately been a bustling camp, empty now and solitary save where a marble shaft glimmered whitely to mark the spot where some departed statesman had wrapped the drapery of his couch about him and lain down to pleasant dreams. Even the glimmering line of the river was white, too. As we stood at the balustrade's edge, brooding over the landscape, life thrilled large within us, life uncomprehended, unformulated, the full cup, the fulfilled dream, which seem wholly possible only to the hopfulness of youth. When the

whole soul revolves, the cup runs over,

The world and life's too big to pass for a dream.

A large bird rose slowly in the distant sky, his wings showing black against the clear ether. "It's funny, too," the genius said, think-

ing aloud ; " the Roman eagles, the American eagle, — and those old chaps thought *their* birds were the emblems o' freedom jest as we think ours is ! Well, I don' know's I'd change James G. Blaine for old Cicero."

In the middle of the Latin recitation next day the uncouth lad inquired abruptly, " What ever became o' him, anyhow, — I mean what end did he make ? "

The teacher stared for a moment, uncomprehending. " Oh, you mean Cicero ? "

" Course," the uncouth one replied laconically.

Then the teacher — how fortunate it was for us that this wise man always knew how to seize the heart of an opportunity ! — gave us a brief sketch of the great Roman's life, showing us how his true nobleness overbalanced his political weaknesses and vanity. He — the teacher — " knew a man " who had visited Tusculum and seen the spot where the ruins of Cicero's villa still stand, with the great ivy tree growing against the sunny wall. He told us of the neighbors whose

country houses surrounded Cicero's dwelling, — Cæsar, Pompey, Brutus, the poet Catullus, Lucullus, celebrated for his feasts, with whom Cicero used to exchange books, — names these were to conjure with. He told us, too, of our hero's beloved daughter, his little Tullia, and her early death; and he made it all more real by reminding us that this was the same Tusculum with whose long, "white streets" we were so familiar in Macaulay's poem. Here the class orator's lips began to move, and we knew that he was muttering dumbly, —

From the white streets of Tusculum,
The proudest town of all.

He had often declaimed it.

When the narrator went on to describe how Cicero, betrayed and deserted, was finally assassinated, the fatal blow being struck by a man whom he had formerly defended, the uncouth lad, forgetting the dignity of the place and hour, brought his hand down on his knee with a resounding smack, and declared in quivering tones, "I call it gol-darned mean!"

All this passed years ago. The girl who was quick to learn and the school genius both heard the call early in life to that land where naught but evil is ever forgotten, and where insight is divine and eternal. The girl who never forgot has spent her powers in patiently bestowing her accumulations on others; the class orator has disseminated his gifts of language through the pen rather than the persuasive voice; and it was, after all, the uncouth lad, uncouth no longer, magnificent in stature and in wisdom, who, on a well-remembered day, rolled grandly forth that noble address on Christian Citizenship.

There was a lump in my throat when I heard him say, "My own first conscious impulse towards making a good citizen of myself dates from the time when I was awkwardly but enthusiastically translating Cicero's orations in the old brick schoolhouse in my native town. I was fortunate enough to begin the study of Latin under a teacher who taught with the spirit and the understanding also, and who had the magnetic power of making his pupils realize that every great lan-

guage possesses a soul as well as an anatomy."

When I stood before that former uncouth lad at the close of his discourse, and saw him look at me questioningly, as one who dimly divines a ghost of the past, I said to him, — since it is generally wiser to laugh than to cry, — "Avez-vous les pantoufles de velours de l'épicier?"

He seized my hand in a mighty grasp of recognition and welcome: "I have, — and those of the butcher and baker and candlestick-maker as well. The women in my parish were always sending 'em to me before I was married."

But, when all is said, the true link between us, in the new as in the old day, was something in which the grocer's velvet slippers had little part: that which made our old school days worth remembering, the image which shaped itself in both our minds as we stood there, —

One and one with a shadowy third —

was that of the wise schoolmaster, who had known how to draw us into the grand cir-

cle where old Rome and young America —
all nations, indeed, and all races of men —
were made one and indivisible in the death-
less continuity of a moral ideal.

II

**A PLEA FOR THE SHIFTLESS
READER**

A PLEA FOR THE SHIFT- LESS READER

A CERTAIN "stark and sufficient man" called Michel de Montaigne, an old Gascon whom Emerson tells us he found "still new and immortal," once wrote: "There is more ado to interpret interpretations than to interpret the things, and more books upon books than upon all other subjects; we do nothing but comment upon one another."

Not long ago I stood in one of the windowed alcoves of a college library, looking with wearied gaze at shelves containing row after row of these same "books upon books," set there for the assistance of the student in interpreting interpretations. With the contents of many of them I was familiar; I knew the helpful criticism which they sometimes offered to the perplexed seeker; I knew, too, the cheerful readiness with which they

32 PLEA FOR THE SHIFTLESS READER

stood prepared to snuff the immortal spark out of genius, grind the inspiration out of inspiration, and distill a fog of commonplaceness over the consecration and the poet's dream; and I asked myself whether, if it were proposed to pass a law making the profession of criticism punishable with death, I should use my influence in favor of beheading the critic, or be content to let him escape with imprisonment for life.

It is true, one may say of critics, as of intoxicants, that both the use and the abuse of them is a matter of personal choice; but this, like most general statements, cannot be altogether proved. The critic is always stealing insidiously upon us in the magazines, creeping into the columns of the newspapers, foisting his opinions upon us before we realize it, finding weak places in our favorite sonnets, pointing out to us that the poems we love best are not "high poetry," suggesting that the authors we delight in are ephemeral creatures destined to live but a day; and such is the web he weaves around us that, unconsciously, we accept him at his

own valuation, and forget that he too is mortal.

It may be that I love the sonnet, as I love my friend, all the more because it is faulty; it may be that the minor poet appeals to me more than the high poet, — that I find in the author who is not a god something that rouses my aspiration and satisfies my need. My friend the critic, who, as Montaigne has it, “will chew my meat for me,” tells me that my judgment is wrong and my taste perverted, because neither coincides with his own. In spite of the bonds thus imposed on me I have a right to arraign the decisions of the critic himself, since nothing is truer than that it is difficult for the wisest man to judge his contemporaries justly, and that every man’s taste is more or less influenced by individual temperament and training.

“What is history,” said Napoleon, “but a fable agreed upon?” No man could justly ask that question in regard to criticism, because every critic brings to his task the coloring of his own mind and temperament, and does not necessarily agree with any other.

34 PLEA FOR THE SHIFTLESS READER

Even after he has dissected his literary prey, and laid bare its anatomy, flesh and blood, sinews and bones, there yet remains in his mind an involuntary bias, because he really likes the thing or really dislikes it.

It is precisely for this right of individual judgment and individual taste that I plead. In this age, when so many people are painfully, laboriously, and conscientiously making a study of literature, agonizing themselves in interpreting interpretations, it gives one a thrill of joy to remember that one has an undoubted right to read the author and omit the interpretation, and to say boldly, "I like this," or "I do not like that," without being obliged by any law of the land to give a reason for the faith that is in him. It is perfectly legitimate for the humblest reader on earth to dissent from the judgments of authors, critics, and all other geniuses, however godlike, and recklessly, shamelessly, to form his own uninspired opinions, and stick to them,—all the more that the godlike ones themselves have been known to differ widely in their decisions.

Emerson, for instance, tells us in his "English Traits" that Scott's poems are a mere traveler's itinerary. Ruskin, on the contrary, finds in Scott the typical literary mind of his age, and his artist eye unfailingly discerns the color chord in the poet's descriptions of nature; but if neither Emerson, Ruskin, nor any other mighty one of the earth had found anything to praise in Scott's poetry, I am not therefore compelled to forget the sense of bounding life and joy with which, in my girlhood, I first read *The Lady of the Lake*, *Marmion*, and *The Lay of the Last Minstrel*.

For me Scott's poems were alive. His armies marched, his watch-fires burned, his alarums sounded. The printed page was full of the inexhaustible energy of the man who wrote it; with him I climbed the hill and trod the heather, and the full tide of his love for everything romantic and chivalrous and Scotch swept me along in its current. When I became a woman, with children of my own, I read these poems to them with the same sense of having discovered a new country,

36 PLEA FOR THE SHIFTLESS READER

a land full of color and romance, and I read to listeners who were never tired of hearing.

I remember that those young auditors asked a hundred eager questions, and that in the questionings and the replies we all found fresh inspiration; but the questions were never those of analysis. The children gave themselves up to the joy of the narrative, and the message that it brought stole upon them as unconsciously as the sound of the rushing mountain breeze steals on the accustomed ear. It was, perhaps, my duty, as a wise parent, to have taught them to pull everything they read to pieces, and put it together again, as one does a dissected map; but if I had done so, the poem or the story, like the map, would henceforth have seemed to their imagination a thing ready to crumble to pieces at a touch.

I remember, too, the message these poems brought to another life, — that of a man who lived in a remote mountain village, knew little of Emerson or Ruskin, and cared not a jot for critics or criticism. I fell in with him

one day when I was taking a long walk along the beautiful country road on which his farm lands bordered, — a taciturn-looking, shaggy-browed old farmer, yet with a twinkle in his eye that contradicted the sternness of his face when in repose. He invited me to ride with him, and our conversation started from the book I held in my hand.

“I guess you’re a reader,” he said, “or you wouldn’t be carrying a book with you on such a long walk.”

“Yes,” I answered, “I am something of a reader. I do not read much on a walk like this, but I have a fancy that a book is a good companion.”

“My father used to run of a notion,” he told me presently, “that reading was a clear waste of time, but mother liked to read. I guess she went hungry for books the most of her life. I took after her in liking books, though I ain’t never read any too many; but when she went to Bangor one time, when I was ’bout seventeen year old, she brought me a copy of Walter Scott’s poetry, an’ I’ve thought a good many times ’t that book made

38 PLEA FOR THE SHIFTLESS READER

a difference in my whole life. I think likely you 've read it?"

"Yes, and enjoyed it."

"Well, I set by it in the first place because I knew what it meant to mother to buy it. Her money come hard, an' books cost more then than what they do now. I s'pose I had naturally more of a romantic streak in me than most farmers' boys, an' it jest needed such a book as that to wake it up. I'd always noticed the sky and the mountains and the like a good deal, an' after that mother 'n' I begun to pick out places round here an' name 'em for places in the book. You'd laugh now if I told you the names I've give 'em in my mind ever since; but I don't laugh, because I remember what comfort mother got out of it. She located Edinburgh over there behind that farthest hill you see; an' I declare, she talked about it so much I ain't never ben sure to this day that it ain't there. I think likely all this seems foolish to you?"

"On the contrary," I said, "I think there's an admirable sort of common sense about it."

"I'm pretty sure I picked me out a differ-

ent kind of a wife from what I should if I had n't fallen in love with Ellen Douglas for my first sweetheart. I did n't choose her jest because she was pretty or smart, or could make good butter an' cheese. An' when I'd got her, mother liked her, an' they lived happy together. Then, pretty soon, the war broke out. We lived 'way off here where we did n't hear much, an' we did n't get newspapers very often, an' father thought the main thing was to stay here on the farm an' raise a good crop o' potatoes an' apples; but I was uneasy. I did n't think war was goin' to be all romance an' troubadours, but I kept sayin' to myself that here was my chance to show what kind of a man I was.

"One day I had to go part way up Cedar Mountain, there, to hunt after a steer 't had strayed off; an' when I looked away off an' saw the mountains all around the sky, an' the sun shinin' on the fields an' ponds, an' the trees wavin' their tops as if they was banners, I broke right out an' hollered: —

"Where 's the coward that would not dare
To fight for such a land?

40 PLEA FOR THE SHIFTLESS READER

“ That settled it. I enlisted, an’ stayed in the army till the war was over. ’T wan’t all poetry, but there ain’t any part o’ my life ’t I feel any better satisfied with. I was lucky. I did n’t get hurt to speak of till the Rebs put a bullet into my shoulder at Gettysburg, — an’ that reminds me o’ somethin’. The third day o’ the fight, when our boys was waitin’ for orders, an’ we could see the regiments all round us goin’ into action, there was some-thin’ goin’ through my mind over ’n’ over as if it was wound up an’ went by machinery; an’ that night, when I was layin’ there wounded an’ mighty uncomfortable, it come to me like a flash what it was. You know how a thing ’ll get into your head an’ keep buzzin’ there. I was sayin’ to myself: —

“ The stubborn spearmen still made good
Their dark, impenetrable wood,
Each stepping where his comrade stood
The instant that he fell.”

This man, who knew nothing about critics and criticism, had involuntarily chosen, in his moment of high impulse and emotion, the very passage which the authorities have pro-

nounced as Homeric as anything in Homer. I doubt if it would have meant half as much to him if he had ever pulled it to pieces, to ask himself why it moved him, or if he had any rhetorical right to be moved by it at all.

It has been my good fortune, on one or two occasions, to wait for a car in a little station which is evidently a rendezvous for two plain-looking men, farmers from their appearance, who seem to meet in this place now and then for the purpose of talking over their favorite literature. I have heard them discuss Thomson's "Seasons," Young's "Night Thoughts," and poems of Goldsmith, Crabbe, Collins, and others. One of them finds his greatest enjoyment in reading Rogers's "Pleasures of Memory;" the other, on a bright winter day, discoursed so lovingly of Cowper's "Task" that I came home and read it with a new comprehension. They search out the beauties, and not the flaws, of their favorite authors; they never—apparently—stop to ask themselves whether these are the writers that persons of trained literary taste ought

42 PLEA FOR THE SHIFTLESS READER

to enjoy; and they will probably go down to their graves in happy oblivion of the fact that they have never chosen the "highest" poetry.

I do not wish to be understood as condemning the training that helps the student to distinguish between good and bad literature, but I do mean to say that if the reader has not that within his own soul which interprets to him the indefinable something which we call genius, it will never be revealed to him by catechisms and anatomical processes. "I hate to be tied down," Tennyson once said, "to say that '*this* means *that*,' because the thought within the image is much more than any one interpretation."

There are, at present, a multitude of woman's clubs in America, most of which are studying the works of some author or authors. For their use and profit and that of similar seekers after truth, Outline Studies have been provided. I have before me, as I write, such a handbook on Lowell, of which Mr. Lowell himself wrote (we are told), "The little book both interested and astonished me." I choose some questions from it at random, asking the

reader to supply the answers which naturally occur to the mind as he reads :—

“To whom was the ‘Invitation’ addressed? The objects and requirements of travel? Could the small portmanteau hold Lowell’s outfit?” (And if not, why did he not take a bigger one?) “Have Americans, especially Western Americans, any genuine love of trees? How is it with Lowell? Have you seen his Genealogical Tree? In what month is Lowell happiest? And you? In what seasons and moods can Lowell ‘bear nothin’ closer than the sky’? What hint does he give of a home not far from Boston?” and so on, indefinitely.

It hardly seems that Lowell’s poetry could have the juice taken out of it more thoroughly if one went on to inquire: “Does Lowell say anywhere that he had been vaccinated? Which are New Englanders generally said to prefer, pies or puddings? Compare Barlow’s ‘Hasty Pudding’ and Whittier’s ‘The Pumpkin’ with Lowell’s reference in ‘The Courtin’ to Huldý parin’ apples. Would you gather from the text that Lowell had

an especial preference for apple pies? And you?"

I was once present at the session of a Bible class in a country church, where the topic under discussion was the story of Daniel in the lions' den. The teacher asked each member of the class, one after the other, "What do you suppose Daniel's thoughts were, when he found himself in this dangerous position?" The answers given varied more or less according to the gifts of imagination possessed by different individuals, but the last person to whom the question was addressed, a heavy-looking man, who seemed to have been painfully anticipating the moment when this demand should be made on his intellect, replied slowly, as if struggling with the depth of his thought, "Why — I s'pose — he thought — he was in — a den o' lions!"

It seems to me that the attempt to interpret genius by the Socratic method must frequently bring forth replies as concise and practical as that of the man in the Bible class. The most perfect piece of literature may be rendered absurd by such a catechism.

We go to a physician for advice about diet, but when he has given it we do not expect him to digest our food for us. So, when the student has been taught in a general way what is admirable in literature, it is not necessary for the teacher to go on labeling every page with, "This is a fine passage." "Do not admire this line ; the metaphor is faulty," and so on. If the reader is ever to develop into a thinker, he must learn to dispense with such literary guide-posts.

When I was a pupil in the high school, translating Virgil, I remember how my spirit rose in rebellion when the footnotes gushed like this :—

"*Suffusa oculos*: wet as to her shining eyes with tears. Female beauty never appears so engaging, and makes so deep an impression on the reader, as when *suffused with tears* and manifesting a degree of anxious solicitude. The poet therefore introduces Venus in that situation, making suit to her father. The speech is of the chastest kind, and cannot fail to charm the reader."

I had it in me to have had some dim appre-

46 PLEA FOR THE SHIFTLESS READER

ciation of the *Æneid*, if I had been let alone. Indeed, there comes clearly to my mind at this moment the memory of a sunny morning, when, in a day-dream, I beheld a certain Sicilian youth, clad in an embroidered cloak of Iberian purple, stand forth to be shot down by a Tuscan arrow. He lived somewhere in the ninth book of the *Æneid*; and when I found that the emotional commentator was not suffused as to his shining eyes with tears, I felt at liberty to mourn for the fair youth whose violet mantle faded so long ago. I am still distinctly grateful to the compiler of foot-notes for omitting to deliver a funeral oration. There are no beauties like those one discovers for one's self, and no emotions as sweet as those which are never put into words.

Every real work of genius holds in it much more than the author himself knew, and each reader interprets it, as he interprets God, according to the poverty or riches of his own nature; yet, even so, that interpretation, meagre though it may be, which comes to him out of the struggle of his spirit is worth more to him than all the rest.

It is a great step gained when one has shaken off the bondage of feeling obliged to comprehend at once everything that one admires. It is perfectly possible to enjoy a thing, even to get some degree of good out of it, before one has arrived at any accurate understanding of its meaning. "No complex or very important truth," De Quincey tells us, "was ever yet transferred in full development from one mind to another. Truth of that character is not a piece of furniture to be shifted; it is a seed which must be sown and pass through the several stages of growth. No doctrine of importance can be transferred in a matured state into any man's understanding from without; it must arise by an act of genesis within the understanding itself."

There is nothing strange in the fact that an ordinary mind cannot at once and entirely comprehend the message of an extraordinary one; but one may be caught at first by mere beauty of language, by rhythm and swing, by some faint glimmer of significance, elusive but divine; and by and by, when experience and love and joy and sorrow and pain have

48 PLEA FOR THE SHIFTLESS READER

gone on day by day offering their commentaries on all the meanings of life, one may wake suddenly to know that the interpretation he vainly sought has come while he was unconscious of it. Your message may not be mine, mine may not be as richly full as that of another, but sooner or later each one comes to his own.

“It is all nonsense to talk about enjoying what you don’t understand,” a gruff old professor of rhetoric said to me once. After the finality of this dictum, it was a pleasure to find, soon after, a book written by another distinguished authority on rhetoric, in which he quotes the following lines from “A Grammarian’s Funeral,” with the confession that, although he likes them very much, he does not know what they mean : —

Sleep, crop and herd ! sleep, darkling thorpe and croft,
Safe from the weather !
He, whom we convoy to his grave aloft,
Singing together,
He was a man born with thy face and throat,
Lyric Apollo !
Long he lived nameless : how should Spring take note
Winter would follow ?

Such an admission on the part of an accomplished scholar encourages one to hope that, after all, even rhetoricians — some of them — are but men, and that they too may acquire a reprehensible appetite for odds and ends of prose and poetry which — to speak accurately — choose themselves, by one knows not what principle of selection, and persist in clinging in the mind and attaching themselves to it like burs.

What real lover of reading has not such a collection of tramp quotations, which haunt him, apropos, frequently, of nothing at all? Right gypsies they are; but all the joy of their vagabondage would be lost, if one felt obliged to sort them, analyze their charm, and store them away, each in its own pigeonhole, labeled "Hope," "Memory," and so on.

It is often claimed that the spirit of our age is a reaction from Puritanism, but it seems to me that there are still a good many people who feel that there must be something sinful in reading anything that one really enjoys. They grind away at the chosen volume, whatever it may be, trembling as they ask

themselves: "Ought I to like this? Is it the sort of thing a truly intellectual person would approve?" Their eyes are blinded, so that they never realize how, all the while, other happy souls are led on little by little, from flowery peak to peak, until they find themselves unconsciously treading with serene footsteps the heights where the masters dwell, the paths where duty is transfigured into delight.

The reader who begins by enjoying Longfellow may end with a genuine appreciation of Milton and Browning; in the meantime, if he never attains to that proud preëminence, there is no law making the offense punishable with death. In literature, as in life, one has a right to choose one's own friends. The man who has poetry enough in his soul to thrill when King Olaf's war horns ring

Over the level floor of the flood

is not wholly without knowledge of the mystic voices that call. Charles Lamb tells us that the names of Marlowe, Drayton, Drummond of Hawthornden, and Cowley — minor

poets all — carry a sweeter perfume to him than those of Milton and Shakespeare. A man whom I once knew, a German scholar of some repute, entitled also to add D. D. and Ph. D. to his name, sent me Rider Haggard's "Dawn" as his notion of a really good story. His taste and mine differed widely, yet I was willing that he should live. I was even able to understand how a man of naturally active and adventurous spirit, compelled by force of circumstances to content himself with a confined and quiet life, might find some sort of outlet in this rampant sensationalism.

There are good authors and eloquent authors and "high" authors enough to go around amongst us all, and allow us one or two decently creditable favorites apiece; and occasionally, in this bleak world of duty, it ought to be permitted us to go browsing over the whole field of literature just for the very deliciousness of it, searching out the forgotten nooks, cropping the tender herbage, and drinking the golden filter where the sunlight drips through the thick branches of hidden trees. Let us cast aside our literary con-

sciences, and taking our authors to our hearts, laugh with them, cry with them, struggle and strive and aspire and triumph with them, and refrain from picking their bones.

This is a stern and exacting and workaday world; it demands analysis and accuracy and purpose; it expects every one of us to be able to reduce life to a mathematical quantity and extract the square root therefrom. The man who works and exacts and analyzes and purposes is the man who succeeds,—as the world counts success,—yet it is none the less true that

A dreamer lives forever,
And a toiler dies in a day.

III

THE MEDITATIONS OF AN EX-SCHOOL-COMMITTEE WOMAN

THE MEDITATIONS OF AN EX-SCHOOL-COMMITTEE WOMAN

I

ONCE upon a time — that is the way good stories used always to begin — a certain Maine town electrified itself by choosing a woman to serve on its superintending school committee, and — to precipitate myself into the narrative as dramatically as possible — I was that woman.

Towns, as well as individuals, are subject to occasional lapses from sound judgment, and that I was the victim offered to the gods in this particular case was as fortuitous an occurrence as the aberration itself. It did not seem that I was thus distinguished above my peers on account of any especial fitness for the position, since the only reason I ever

heard alleged for the choice was the statement offered by one of the members of the nominating committee that I "had nothing else to do." I may add in passing that two years later, when the town became a city and the school committee was transformed into a school board, my name was dropped from the list on the ground that during my term of office I had "done nothing," a result at which, as it seems to me, no one had a right to complain, since it was the only one to be expected from the given premises.

I was away from home at the time the election took place, and when I returned to find my unprepared feet suddenly planted upon the ladder of greatness, my earliest sensations were those of unmitigated dismay. In the first place, granting the alleged premises, namely, that I had nothing else to do, as a just reason for election to office, there seemed to be no limit to the surprises the future might have in store. I might awake on some melancholy morning to find myself President of the United States. Second, when I remembered with meekness the position I

occupied in the voting — or non-voting — list, — “women, Indians, idiots, and minors,” I asked myself how it happened that I was eligible for office. Was it possible to discriminate in this manner against the rest of my class, and might I not, by accepting the greatness thrust upon me, be opening the door to Indians and idiots also?

When I mentioned these misgivings to my friends they unanimously advised me to resign myself, but not the office.

“As far as idiots are concerned,” A said cheerfully, “the door has been open to them a long time.” “And in regard to your feeling of unfitness for the position,” B suggested encouragingly, “you have only to remember the old story of the father’s advice to his boy on leaving home: ‘Keep your mouth shut, and people won’t find out what a fool you are!’”

Thus panoplied in the optimism of my friends, I examined my qualifications as they stood in my own mind, and found that they were mainly negative.

I had never taught school. My only relation toward public schools in the past had

been one of those which the pupil naturally and inevitably assumes toward the teacher, — either that of active partisanship or armed neutrality. I had no prejudices to overcome, no theories to work out, no ideas that had any sufficient reason for being. I was conscious that I knew a great deal more about 'my neighbors' affairs than I did about a common denominator, and that if an examination in elementary branches were proposed to me I should take to the woods. Indeed, I have a distinct recollection of one occasion early in my career as an office-holder, when an examination in arithmetic was pending in one of the grammar school grades, and I sought my young son, to whom mathematical studies presented comparatively few difficulties, for advice and assistance in preparing for the ordeal. He was engaged in some boyish avocation out of doors, and I sat beside him on a sunny bank while the business in hand was settled. When I rose to go, I left him soliloquizing as one more in sorrow than surprise, "And this is your school-committee woman!"

It will be perceived that I was very much in the position of a neophyte about to be initiated into mysteries. I sat down, as one may say, at the feet of The School System, all ready to absorb it at every pore. Not being of sufficiently logical mind, I was never able to reduce The System to any definite form, or to approach it from any but an exoteric standpoint. My position in regard to this mysterious bulwark of our nation has always been that of George Sampson in "Our Mutual Friend," when he says of Mrs. Wilfer's under petticoat, — viewed only by the eye of faith, "After all, you know, ma'am, we know it's there!" Now and then, at the full of the moon, when all the auspices seemed to favor, under the influence, let us say, of large doses of "McGuffey's Reader," or when I heard the most infantile of all the physiology classes reciting,

My eyes, my ears, my nose,

and so on to the triumphant finale of "my toes," — at such moments as these I almost caught the rustle of the advancing or retreat-

ing skirts of The System, but I was, I fear, never worthy to have full vision of it. It is impossible, however, for the most unimpressible school-committee woman to sit forever, like a bump on a log, and learn nothing in an atmosphere where wisdom is as plentiful as dew. When a pupil bounded the United States, "On the North by Canada, on the east by Fairfield" (Maine), "on the south by the 'Artic' Ocean, and on the west by Van Diemen's Land," though I doubted his geographical accuracy, I learned something about the vagaries of which the human mind is capable.

The continuous, wearying routine of school life, the endless monotony combined with endless variation, the limitless demands on patience, the iteration and reiteration necessary to impress a single idea on the mind of the average pupil, — all these I marked, and gained from them some conception of the difficulty of the problem with which educators are confronted, — a problem rendered the more discouraging by the fact that in its solution it continually demands the impossible.

EX-SCHOOL-COMMITTEE WOMAN 61

Early in my career as a school-committee woman I began to make discoveries — disheartening discoveries — like the following: The educational problem is one whose workings can never be fully accounted for by the accepted laws of nature; the only principle which can be relied upon as of universal application being the one which sets forth that the introduction of a new element will always produce perturbations. Moreover, to an ordinary mind like my own, the constant contemplation of this problem had the effect of upsetting my previous theological convictions, and even of rendering the consolations of religion a doubtful quantity, since, after studying “the tricks and manners” of the aggregated youth of the community intimately, the claim that they all possessed souls seemed absolutely untenable. If it was sometimes possible to believe of the children of the lower grades that

Heaven lies about us in our infancy,
it also seemed true beyond a doubt that
Shades of the prison house begin to close
Upon the growing boy,

and whether his soul should be introduced to him — or he be introduced to his soul — by methods of outside or inside application became one of the most serious questions to be answered.

My experiences as a school official ushered me into a new world, — a world of hitherto undreamed-of difficulties and responsibilities. At first I was disposed to dwell on the possibilities of the situation under ideal conditions, but I speedily came down to earth, and began to ask myself what could be done with the materials at hand. I grew to love the bright faces of the children even at their naughtiest, — and that was sometimes very naughty, — but when, at the end of my two years' apprenticeship, I retired from my undeserved eminence, I carried with me into the obscurity of private life the conviction, which has been growing ever since, that it is not the children, but the teachers, who stand in need of a champion. Indeed, my only reason for dragging my ancient honors with such a flourish of trumpets into public gaze is to give myself some apparent claim to

hurl my glove into the arena in the teachers' behalf, and to hurl it so violently that somebody will know it is there, and so rise up and call me blessed — or the contrary !

A teacher is in the nature of things a creature *sui generis* ; his world is not our world. Even Charles Lamb — even the gentle Elia — has his gibe at “ the schoolmaster ” in the midst of his pity for him because he is compelled in the very nature of things to regard the universe itself as an eternal lesson book. “ The least part of what is to be expected of him ” (the schoolmaster), Lamb tells us, “ is to be done in school hours. He must insinuate knowledge at the *mollia tempora fandi*. He must seize every occasion — the season of the year, the time of day, a passing cloud, a rainbow, a wagon of hay, a regiment of soldiers going by — to inculcate something useful. Nothing comes to him not spoiled by the sophisticating medium of moral uses.” A clergyman's profession offers the nearest parallel to that of a teacher, but the former is supposed to be under the direct guidance and protection of the higher powers, whereas

the teacher, with most of the clergyman's responsibilities, is obliged to accept as his immediate Providence a school board of whom it is not always possible to say, "Of such is the kingdom of heaven." It is true that we, as parents, have more far-reaching duties toward our children than their teachers can have; but if we do not choose to perform these duties, there is, unless we transgress the law of the land, no one who is entitled to call us to account. There are, however, periods when we exist simply for the purpose of calling the teacher to account. Is he not paid out of the public treasury? Go to, then! if our children are not models, is it not his duty to make them so?

It is, to the initiated, a self-evident fact that for the thoroughly successful teacher there is but one standard: he must be an angel for temper, a demon for discipline, a chameleon for adaptation, a diplomatist for tact, an optimist for hope, and a hero for courage. To these common and easily developed qualities of mind and heart, he should add india-rubber nerves, and a cheerful willingness to trust a

large portion of his reward to some other world than this. One of the most difficult phases of the teacher's profession is the fact that he, more than almost any other man, is at the mercy of theorists. Nearly every educational dignitary who enters into the subject with any energy of purpose brings his pet theories into the work with him, and who but the long-suffering teacher shall put those theories into action, and discover whether they have any practical basis? Oftentimes, unfortunately, the theories go on operating long after it has been sufficiently demonstrated that their basis is untenable. Take, for instance, the "development" theory, — which is intended, as far as one can judge, to develop the child at the expense of the teacher. This theory dispenses largely with the use of textbooks, being based on the idea that the child, if cut off from other sources of supply, can go on indefinitely spinning a thread out of his own inner consciousness. The teacher soon finds out that there is an inherent difference between a child and a silk-worm, and that the latter is much better fitted by nature

to furnish cocoons on a business basis. As a matter of fact, it is the teacher who does most of the spinning. One teacher writes me: "I am very much dissatisfied with the work in grammar, or 'language' as it is now called. The pupils do not have books; we write from year to year the lessons for the classes on the board. The pupils copy into blank books what is necessary. It seems to me drudgery for the teacher to be required to do so much unnecessary work. The pupils need some technical grammar, — need to know how to use books. One reason why Latin is so hard for them during their first year in the high school is that they do not know how to use an English grammar."

It is tolerably obvious that when the pupil who is living from hand to mouth on the contents of a grammar book or a "sum book" of his own construction desires to know anything not contained in these invaluable classics, he must, unless he has become thoroughly versed in the cocoon process, ask his teacher, who thus becomes the final authority in these branches. I once heard of a young man who,

when teaching a country school, was much disturbed by an unpleasant tendency on the part of his pupils to ask him the definitions of words with which he was not familiar. One day, resorting in his exasperation to the vernacular of his youth, which seemed to him to make the statement doubly emphatic, he put an end to these inquiries. "I want you to remember," he said with decision, "that I ain't no dictionary!" I imagine that the teacher referred to and others similarly situated have long desired to proclaim freely and to all whom it may concern, "I ain't no grammar!"

Another comment upon the workings of the cocoon theory is that which I have many times heard from high school teachers who complain that pupils coming from the grammar grades are so accustomed to being carried along by the teacher that the work of teaching them methods of independent thought is an exceedingly difficult one. The same complaint is made by grammar school teachers whose graduates — as is the custom in some schools — are admitted to the high school on

probation for two months, at the end of which time, "if unable or unwilling" to keep up with the class, they can be sent back to the grammar school. "I contend that it is not fair," says one teacher. "The pupils cannot in two months' time get used to the change from grammar to high school methods, inasmuch as in the high they are thrown on their own resources, while in the grammar they are spurred on by the teacher." There is one gleam of hope in regard to these methods of child development. The people who are making a specialty of child study with a view to being able eventually to take the dear little victims apart like dissected maps, and, by combining Tommy's superior abilities with Willie's unresting energy and Samuel's moral virtues, construct a model for the species, — these wise philosophers, it seems to me, must sooner or later discover that the amount of spinning material in a child's interior has been overestimated, and that the dreamed-of cocoon process is only another instance of "The desire of the moth for the star"!

Another modern notion which helps to make the path of the school-teacher a thorny one is the theory that a child ought to be putting out simultaneously and in every direction as many feelers as a centipede has legs. As a matter of fact, a pupil who has learned thoroughness and application has acquired *something*, even if he cannot explain the precession of the equinoxes or tell how many feathers there are in a hen. There used, in the former days, to be a good many poetic similes in which the unfolding of a child's mind was likened to the gradual opening of a flower, leaf by leaf. The revised plan admits of no such sentimental and slow-moving processes. A child's mind is now opened like an umbrella, expanding equally and instantaneously at all points, and, fortunately for the child, it also resembles the umbrella in that it sheds a good deal more than it retains.

Perhaps I can best illustrate what is attempted in this expansive process by giving an actual schedule of work, furnished me by a teacher in grammar grades. The teacher in

question has had long experience, and is deeply interested in her work, in which she has been most successful. It is, in fact, because she has an exalted ideal of what a teacher's work should be that she complains of the constantly increasing demands which make it impossible for her to do work satisfactory to herself in any department.

I give her details of regular classes and "extras," with some of the comments added by herself:—

"Two classes reading; try to study author's meaning, give expression to same; tell about author; phonics in lower grades. Two classes spelling; definitions; use of words in sentences. Two classes geography. The geography taught is mostly physical. The pupil learns very little of his own country, does n't even know the names and capitals of States. I asked one of mine to point out Boston on the map, and, to my surprise, she hunted in the woods of Maine!

"Two classes history. Two classes grammar. Two classes arithmetic.

"These classes constitute the regular pro-

gramme. Add to these the following extras:—

“On Mondays we have the ‘American Citizen.’ Write Greek stories each week. Twice each week, writing. Once a week physiology, including hygiene and temperance. Twice a term study some poem and send result to superintendent.

“Our music teacher comes once in two weeks. He selects one or two pieces of music, and we teach the pupils. In two weeks more he comes to see the results of our work. Pupils must sing every day. The special teacher in gymnastics comes once in two weeks and takes the class herself, after which we give lessons each day until she comes again. Our next extra teacher is in mechanical drawing. He teaches only in the high school and highest grammar grade. We have had no instruction in geometry. He went to the board and drew an equilateral triangle, tried to get the name from pupils. I finally told him that I doubted if they had ever heard the word. He said they would have to do most of the figures by

copying them. I question the advantage gained.

"We have also questions in physics, copied on cards and sent to the principals of each grammar grade. These have been given to the pupils to try at home and afterwards at school. Have not yet had time to test results.

"Instead of examinations at the end of the term, as formerly, we now give tests each month, so that I always have sets of papers to be corrected and ranked. We get the total average of all, the average of each study, the class standing, our estimate of each pupil, — which we guess at, — and then the general average. If you add to our course some of the requirements of the larger cities, — manual training, sewing, cooking, algebra, Latin, science, and geometry, you can see how the grammar school course has been overcrowded, — 'enriched,' they call it, — and why it is so hard for us to do thorough work, with so many things to cram into the poor children's brains."

I confess that, as far as I am personally concerned, when I reached this point in the narrative I positively declined to "add" any-

thing more. I was already mentally black and blue, and felt that one more extra would be more than flesh could bear. Indeed, when the writer of the schedule went on to state that she was at that moment suffering from an illness one of the manifestations of which was the inflammation of every particle of mucous membrane in her body, I felt, in the midst of my compassion, the sort of elation which comes from seeing the logical sequence of events carried out to its legitimate conclusion. Why should not her mucous membrane be inflamed, and all her microbes get out on the warpath? It seems the only natural result to be expected from the successful working of an enriched grammar school course.

II

It may, perhaps, have been observed, in my exposition of the sufferings of the teacher in the preceding pages, that the authorities quoted have been mostly taken from my own sex, and if, when I go on to propose my long-meditated scheme for organizing a Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Teachers, I

assume that this society would be predominantly female in its membership, which would presumably be largely recruited from the ranks of the teachers themselves, the reasons for such an assumption would not all be drawn from an offensive partisanship on my part.

There are probably three times as many women as men engaged in teaching in the United States; moreover, so far as I have been able to observe, the men teachers have fewer wrongs that cry aloud for redress. The man who is a good disciplinarian, who can "govern a school," is practically his own man everywhere. He may be inexperienced, liable to mistakes, not wholly up to par in intellectual acquirements, but if he has that in him which enables him to control and stimulate pupils, the average school board does not greatly interfere with him. As for the reverse of the picture, the man who, as the phrase is, "has no government," the sooner he seeks some other avocation the better for all concerned. He was not born for school-teaching. With the woman teacher, however, the case is

always and innately different. She may have taught for years, may fill her position admirably as one who is mistress of it, but she can never acquire so large a stock of knowledge, discretion, tact, or experience, but that a man, any man, because he is a man, can teach her something about her duties.

In the smaller cities and towns the superintendents of common schools and principals of high schools are very likely to be bright young fellows, who have just been graduated from college, and wish to fill these positions for a few years in order to lay up money for studying a profession. They come to their work fresh-hearted, filled with confidence and theories, and the woman teacher who has seen the same theories rise and flourish and decay under previous régimes is expected to greet each new appearance with perennial ardor, and manifest the same surprise when they disappear into the eternal framework of things. She no sooner accustoms herself to the amiable vagaries of one superintendent of schools than another and different sun rises on her horizon, and she is obliged to

learn a new and varied style of genuflections toward the east. Meanwhile, the school board, excellent men who frequently understand their own business much better than that of other people, are at perfect liberty, when they find a moment's leisure to attend to it, to move her about as if she were a pawn on a chessboard.

During her official working hours the teacher is responsible for the health, manners, and morals, as well as the intellectual progress, of her pupils. She is equally at fault in regard to the bright ones who are kept back and the stupid ones who are not brought forward. On the days when rank is announced she is to expect to be greeted with tears and innuendoes on the part of those pupils who habitually expect rewards they have not worked for. All the loss of time and mental energy brought about by practice in athletics, by dancing-schools, evening gayeties, and the like, lies, of course, at her door. As a rule, parents know that these things must be the teacher's fault. When — after dismissing those victims who are un-

justly kept after school — the teacher goes home at night, she is accompanied by lessons to study, papers of different kinds to correct, work to lay out, and wasted tissues to renew.

But does the teacher have no recreations? Certainly, — her recreations are many, but not varied. Not infrequently the school superintendent has a hobby, in which case he forms classes in psychology, history, pedagogy, or what not, and the teacher may find recreation by joining in these intellectual revels. If she does not join, it may be suspected that the root of the matter is not in her. There are teachers' meetings also, sometimes for conference and for conveying information of real benefit, and sometimes for the purpose of telling the teacher something she has heard before, or that she knows has no practical truth in it. If she is too weary to go out when her tasks are ended she may refresh herself at her home by reading educational publications, for one or more of which she is commended to subscribe. Almost every term there are teachers' institutes or

conventions, where she can hear papers read all day, and attend a lecture in the evening. She would better not attend whist or dancing parties, lest she should be quoted as setting a bad example to her pupils, but she is at perfect liberty to "prepare a paper" for a woman's club, study American history with the Daughters of the Revolution, plunge into the wild dissipation of church socials, or join in the revels at a "pronunciation picnic," a form of entertainment which I have seen gravely recommended by authorities on educational matters.

In the summer, during the long vacation, there are summer schools. These begin in July, and continue through August. They are not compulsory, but it is a politic measure for the woman teacher to attend one or more of them. Here she may meet other superintendents and other teachers, hear more papers read, and attend more lectures. Or she may join a Traveler's Club, provide herself with a bag and a hammer, and go to and fro over the earth, chipping off the face of nature, and taking in instruction at the

pores. In short, she may do what she pleases, provided there are papers and lectures and tediousness connected with it, and provided she never, never, allows herself — or anybody else — to forget that she is a schoolma'am.

There is a hue and cry raised sometimes that the higher education for women diminishes the ratio of marriages. A large number of college-educated women become school-teachers because it is necessary for them to be self-supporting, and when they have once plunged into the vortex, opportunities for marriage must be either accidental or miraculous. The masculine superintendents and principals are usually men already married, or, if of callow years, they are apt to be "engaged" to some giddy girl whose knowledge of psychology has been mainly acquired by sitting under white umbrellas at the seashore, or on the stairs at evening parties. The young men who show themselves at the summer schools either bring their wives with them, or appear for a brief period in order to "read a paper," or deliver a lecture on an abstruse subject, before retir-

ing in good order to some spot where there is more fun and less wisdom. Occasionally it occurs to two educators to wed each other, but this is sometimes more objectionable than the marriage of cousins.

When the society of which I have dreamed has been organized, it will involve the sending of female teachers during each vacation period to some frivolous place of resort where the labels will be taken off their backs, and they will be forbidden under penalty of law to listen to papers or lectures, to talk shop, or "take a course" in anything but hilarity. They will be encouraged to ride and row, play golf and tennis, to climb mountains for the fun of it, without making the least effort to find out what ingredients enter into the composition of the everlasting hills. They will also be allowed to dance, to talk with young men on subjects distinctly un-instructive, to sit on the sea sand, and ask no questions about what the wild waves are saying, and to wake in the night without utilizing the time by repeating the multiplication table or giving the parts of speech.

What effect this society will have remains to be seen, but I believe the experiment is worth trying.

III

When I had progressed thus far in my "Meditations" A came in, and I read to him what I had written. A is always a good target at which to fire one's mental ammunition, because he is willing to comment, and has no scruple about saying disagreeable things if he considers that the occasion calls for them.

"There is some French writer, — I've forgotten which one," he began with his usual cheerful readiness when I had finished, — "who says there are three sexes, 'men, women, and clergymen.' I see you divide them into men, women, and teachers."

"On the contrary," I asserted, "I have taken especial pains to discriminate between the men and women teachers, and to call attention to the fact that 'male and female created he them.'"

"Oh, yes; you've discriminated as one

discriminates between Methodist and Baptist, or as a man does if you ask him, 'What's the difference?' and he answers, 'Oh, the difference is the odds!' You say the male of the species is more independent than the female, and has a better time; but, in general, you've lumped them together as a set of poor devils, just a little outside the pale of common humanity, who can never allow themselves to be moved by the sweet influences of the Pleiades, or feel their hearts leap up when they behold a rainbow in the sky without remarking, —

“ ‘Thanks for the lesson of this spot!’ ”

“ I have tried to describe them,” I answered with that immediate personal application of the subject for which my sex is noted, “as beings of like passions as ourselves, and doing a great deal more for the uplifting of society than you and I are ever likely to do. They would be overworked if they had only their own legitimate burdens to carry, but, in addition, we — you and I and the rest of the world — are always shoving off our re-

sponsibilities on to them, and every educator who has a new theory is asking them to embody it in their work."

"Now, see here," A said comfortably; "just remain calm! A woman always gets so excited over everything! I had an idea that the modern school-teacher—and I'll call him a *her* since you seem to prefer it—had a good deal done for her. Aren't we building schoolhouses for her full of light and air, and ventilation and sanitation, and all the rest of it? Don't we give her school libraries, and pictures on the walls, and plants in the windows? Aren't we talking now," he went on with a grin, "of letting her add menageries to the other attractions,—cats and dogs, and hencoops under the windows, and sheepfolds pretty soon, where the kids can observe the whole evolution of the Duchess Trousers, 'from the sheep to the man'? What more do you want?"

"I don't want any more; I want a good deal less. As a rule, every added 'attraction,' as you call it, means more work for the teacher."

"And you don't think you have overstated the case — just for the sake of making out a good story, you know?"

"I think," I affirmed, with just that degree of increased warmth which this question was intended to call forth, "that I have understated it. I have said nothing about the extra work at graduation and exhibition seasons, neither have I mentioned the subject of school fairs and debates, nor the parties and rides where the teacher is expected to officiate as 'guide, philosopher, and friend.' Why," — casting all moderation to the winds, and prepared to nail my colors to the mast, — "from the time a child first enters school until he departs from it, the teacher seems to be expected to do everything for him but put him to bed."

"The teacher *does* sometimes hear him say his prayers," A remarked gravely. "I can testify to that."

"This state of things is n't confined to any one place, either," I went on, plunging once more into unqualified assertion. "I have a friend who teaches in one of the Bos-

ton schools, the last person in the world who would ever voluntarily be found marching in processions or engaging in hand-to-hand encounters with mobs. Yet on Dewey Day she spent hours in helping to marshal a host of schoolchildren through crowded streets, picking them from under the feet of trampling hordes, and protecting them from utter destruction when they were overrun by mob violence."

"Well, what then? Would you have had the poor little chaps all left at home? That's the way we teach 'em patriotism, — rub it in, you see."

"Every one of those children," I said severely, "was legally entitled to two parents. There must be some use for parents in the everlasting economy of things, though many of them don't seem to suspect it. If the time ever comes when the enriched natural history courses demand that the pupil shall be sent into wild beasts' cages in order to observe their habits, it is the teacher who will be doomed to accompany him. And if during the visit the lion begins to lick his chaps

and demand food, it is the teacher who will be expected to come cheerfully to the front and say, 'Eat *me* ! When I accepted my present munificent salary, I prepared myself, of course, not to falter at little sacrifices like this.' In the meantime the child will have retired in good order, and the parent — the female parent — will be safely at home embroidering a doily, or writing a paper for the Woman's Club. What the male parent will be doing is one of the things ' no fellow could be expected to know ' ! ”

“ What I admire about you,” A said, with his hand upon the door knob, “ is the restraint you put upon your imagination.” He stepped outside, then reappeared for an instant to inquire, “ Well, what are you going to do about it ? ” and with this Parthian shot he kindly closed the door, — kindly, because he was well aware that I did not know the answer to his question.

IV
PIAZZA PHILOSOPHY

PIAZZA PHILOSOPHY

THERE is an old story, with which everybody is familiar, of a man who said that the proper way to construct a house was to build a piazza first and then tack the house on to it. That was not the way our piazza came into being. The house itself had been built many years before it became our house. When we entered into possession it was already memory-haunted, full of delightful traditional shadows which we have never wished to displace, although I do bethink me now of one bad quarter of an hour which was inflicted on me by an estimable old lady, one of my earliest callers in the days of my young housekeeping.

“My dear,” she inquired placidly, “would it trouble you to know that somebody has died in every room in your house?”

I repeated this question to my husband, who at once took the sting out of it.

“ Well, what more do you want ? ” he asked.
“ Don’t you see that they have n’t left us any room to die in ? ”

It was owing to this cheerful view of the matter that when we built the piazza, and so annexed a new joy, we made the ghosts as free of it as ourselves, and it is perhaps through their presence and influence that it became at once a place for dreaming dreams and seeing visions.

It is, as to architecture, a Colonial-Grecian piazza. I know it is colonial because the man who designed it was especially bidden to make it so, and I am equally sure that it is Grecian because a college professor referred to it in an art lecture as a “ Grecian portico.”

It is a long and wide piazza, with airy spaces and groups of slender columns ; and if it seems to my fancy both ampler and more romantic than it really is, it is because since it grew up into the world of piazzas it has taken in (in the mind of one woman at least) the whole material universe,—the green earth and blue vault of heaven, sun, moon, and stars,—and has added thereto the Garden of

Eden, the Age of Pericles, all the stateliest features of our own colonial era, and some very satisfactory bits of the present century, with here and there a background borrowed from Chaos and Old Night. I hardly know what more one need ask of a mere sublunary nineteenth-century piazza! I could give the actual dimensions, but I am not one of those commonplace beings who measure everything by feet and inches; it is wider than a church door, and not so deep as a well, — that is, a very deep well, — and that suffices.

On this piazza I have entertained many a wonderful guest. Indeed, at the very first, just after the art lecture in which the piazza began to masquerade as a Grecian portico, there came — on one of the fairest of summer mornings, I remember — a certain squat, snub-nosed, barefooted philosopher, whom I recognized at a glance. He was a man whose silver tongue had in the old days made many an Athenian youth forget the lapse of time, but I did not encourage him to speak, because I did not know whether it would be one of his good or bad days. He might, indeed, dis-

course of immortality in language of serene and noble beauty, or he might spend hours on end splitting hairs.

"Come, Parmenides," I seemed to hear him say, "let us go to the Ilissus, and sit down in some quiet spot, and discuss freely as to whether things begin at both ends, or in the middle, or upside down, or inside out. And if a part is equal to the whole, as we have sometimes argued that it might be, why is not a quarter of a dollar just as good as a whole one and a little better?"

And Parmenides might reply, even as of old, —

"But if one is to remain one, it will not be a whole, and will not have parts."

It is patent to the feeblest imagination that this sort of conversation, though it may be Greek, is not in the least colonial, and, therefore, not suited to a Colonial-Grecian piazza; but on that moonlight night when the young Alcibiades, wine-flushed, rose-wreathed, beautiful as a god, sat just where the great elm tree casts its moving shadow between the twin groups of slender pillars, the words

which fell from his lips were neither Grecian nor colonial, but spoke the innermost language of the hearts of men in all times. What the message of Socrates could be when he chose, I learned from this imperishably beautiful young drunkard.

“If I were not afraid that you would think me drunk I would have sworn as well as spoken to the influence which they [the words of Socrates] have always had and still have over me. For my heart leaps within me more than that of any Corybantian reveler, and my eyes rain tears when I hear them. . . . This man has often brought me to such a pass that I have felt that I could hardly endure the life which I am leading. . . . For he makes me confess that I ought not to live as I do, neglecting the wants of my own soul and busying myself with the concerns of the Athenians, therefore I hold my ears and tear myself away from him. He is the only person who ever made me feel ashamed, which you might think not to be in my nature, and there is no one else who does the same. . . .

“For, although I forgot to mention this

before, his words are ridiculous when you first hear them, — he clothes himself in language that is as the skin of the wanton satyr, — but he who pierces the mask, and sees what is within, will find that they are the only words that have a meaning in them, and also the most divine, abounding in fair examples of virtues and of the largest discourse, or rather extending to the whole duty of a good and honorable man.”

I told the story of this vision to a real young man who sat on the piazza the next morning, — a nineteenth-century young man with all the modern improvements, — and I went on to remark to him — very reprehensibly, no doubt — that it would be a good thing for every young man to get drunk once if he could receive such an accession of divine common sense in the process as Alcibiades seems to have done.

He answered me soberly enough, looking vaguely at my daimon, which had just then lighted on the arm of his chair, “ Oh, well! I suppose there are times in every fellow’s life when he hears the Voices — don’t you ? ”

So I knew that the miracle performed for Alcibiades was not a solitary one.

Socrates had a daimon, and so have I. I do not know whether the Grecian portico had anything to do with the appearance of my familiar, or if the fact of Socrates' possession bears any relation to my own. I know that his daimon was a divinity within his own breast, and that mine — differentiated perhaps by his semi-colonial environment — is an outward and visible devil's darning-needle. He is not a painted dragon-fly, but a long, angular, loose-jointed, interfering, meddlesome devil's darning-needle, and, so far as I have any reason to know, he was built simultaneously with the piazza. At any rate, he appeared soon after we took possession of our new territory, and has reappeared there with each succeeding summer.

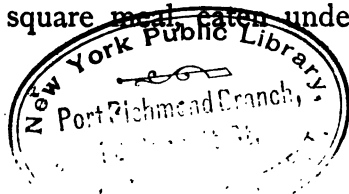
I know nothing about the average length of days which is granted to creatures of his kind; it matters not in his case, because he is a supernatural insect, one of the few, the immortal devil's darning-needles, who were not born to die. In the early days of his so-

journal with us, I had an instinctive habit of jumping, whenever he came near in that swooping, waggle-tailed manner which characterizes his methods of approach, but the wisdom of the poet has been verified in this case as in many another, — I first endured, then pitied, then embraced. Gradually he became my guide, philosopher, and friend. He has taught me a good deal and I have taught him a good deal, and that means, as it generally does when such is the case, that first and last there has been an appreciable amount of disagreeableness between us. He is an insect of violent prejudices, and I can usually tell at once whether or not he approves of the callers who frequent the piazza. He has, I am sadly aware, two settled antipathies, — tramps and nervous women.

How well I remember the first tramp who made my daimon's acquaintance! He was a care-free, happy-go-lucky fellow, who had seen better days which he was contented to forget. With a deferential "Allow me," he sank into a piazza chair, removed his shabby hat, wiped the perspiration from his brow, and from that

moment, despite the wildest efforts to dislodge him, the darning-needle sat like black care on the bald spot on that hobo's crown. I had not supposed that a professional wanderer, used to living near to Nature's heart and resting his head upon the lap of earth, would have minded a trivial creature like a devil's darning-needle so much, but I confess that I have never personally been in a position to judge just how ticklish a thing a long and active insect nestling on one's bald spot can make itself.

1555
He paused — my hobo guest — in the midst of an eloquent and lucid exposition of the duty of every human being to help every other human being, passing good deeds on from one to another, apropos of the fact that the world, in my person, owed him a dinner, to remark suddenly and with violence, "Oh, the dev—il's darning-needle, I mean!" And just at that moment his tormentor soared into the air and thus — apparently — preserved himself from battle, murder, and sudden death. When my visitor was about to go, after a square meal eaten under cover



and far from the haunts of harassing insects, I asked him, —

“To whom are you going to pass this good deed on? — if it is a good deed, of which I am not sure.”

He replied airily, “Oh, I may find a chance to help some other poor devil. But, madam, if I don’t, it’s all one. When I took to the road, I freed myself from all my previous responsibilities.”

The darning-needle flew down and perched on the arm of my chair, and I said to him, as I watched the departing figure of the wanderer, “I begin to wish I was a tramp myself. My responsibilities are always hanging like a millstone around my neck. How absolutely delightful it would be to shed them all and be free!”

“Somebody,” remarked my ungrateful daimon, “said on this very piazza the other day, ‘The people who talk most about their responsibilities are the ones who feel them least.’”

Since I have allowed myself to keep a daimon I know how politicians feel when the

newspapers begin to look up their records. I live constantly under the shadow of a hereafter. Why, prithee, should a mere ignorant devil's darning-needle be continually hoisting me with my own petard? Must I, forsooth, live up to all my smart sayings?

I never knew by just what underhand — or perhaps I should say underfoot — method my daimon insinuated himself into the pocket of the female book agent, the black and yawning pocket under her dress skirt wherein she carried the book which she intended to spring upon the unwary.

This work, whose merits she was advocating to a needy world, was one of those compiled with the purpose of enabling the unlearned to appear wise without the trouble of being so, and as she restored the volume to its mysterious receptacle she remarked pleasantly to me, —

“Of course you are aware, madam, that no matter what your other advantages may be, unless you are able to appear cultured you can never expect to enter the best society.”

It is a disheartening thing to know that

one's lack of culture is such as to be apparent at a moment's glance to the meanest observer, and it was while I was watching with saddened vision the yawning pocket, into whose depths all my hopes of good society were disappearing, that my friend, the devil's darning-needle, flew suddenly forth and dashed himself against the prophetic forehead of Cassandra. At that moment, too, he and Cassandra rose simultaneously into the air and flapped their wings.

When peace had been restored within our borders and I saw my daimon gleefully gyrating to and fro in the sun, I said to him with some asperity, —

“May I ask what that devil's dance is intended to indicate?”

“I am rejoicing,” he answered, “because I am only a plain devil's darning-needle —”

“Plain enough, if that is what you want,” I interrupted maliciously.

“I heard you telling somebody the other day that I was not so black as I had been painted. However, that's neither here nor there; I was rejoicing that, as a mere insect

without brains, I am not called upon to pretend to know what I don't know. I would rather be a sincere devil's darning-needle than a foolish virgin shining in the best society on the strength of borrowed oil."

"You're always giving thanks for doubtful mercies," I suggested spitefully. There is something so exasperating in the appearance of a devil's darning-needle putting on airs. "The other day you were jubilating because you had no soul, and yet, to the ordinary judgment, there is nothing so very enviable in the lot of a creature with neither mind nor soul."

"I said," he remarked loftily, "and I stand to it, that if I were unfortunate enough to possess a soul I should have to spend my whole time 'saving' it. As it is, I am at liberty to do something more useful." With the words he swung himself airily away, passing with apparent heedlessness as he did so through the meshes of a cobweb in which a struggling fly had just been entangled, and restoring the poor insect to life and liberty.

Generally speaking, my daimon does not

put himself very strongly in evidence when I have callers of my own sex. He knows their tricks and their manners, their constitutional tendency to scream at the approach of a harmless insect, as if he were a midnight invader with a dark lantern instead of an innocent devil's darning-needle clad in his customary suit of solemn black.

Frequently, however, I am grieved to know that he is perched on some point of vantage near by, looking at the weary countenance of my visitor, and listening while she explains that she has been waiting for weeks to snatch an opportunity to pay this call, but one duty follows another so rapidly in modern life that one never gets time to do what one most desires.

"What are these duties that they all wear themselves out with?" my officious daimon inquires when the caller has departed. "Why is every one of them afflicted with 'that tired feeling'?" Did n't you tell me that the woman who just went away had a small family and a comfortable income, and did n't 'do her own work,' as the phrase is?"

"Well," I explained, "when she does n't do her own work she does some other person's. They all do. There are the demands of housekeeping, the demands of the family, the social demands, entertainments to get up for the support of all kinds of benevolences, for the current expenses of the church —"

"Then," this troublesome insect interrupted rudely, "the home is really an incubus and not a joy, and all the stuff I have heard you read aloud on this piazza about the larger life and conscientious giving is impractical nonsense. One really eats and drinks one's way into the kingdom of heaven at twenty-five or fifty cents a ticket, as the case may be. Do you suppose," he went on with increasing flippancy, "that when you get there, you will find the angels giving a pink tea for the support of the heavenly choir, or will it be only a musicale 'with local talent'?"

"If you were a human being instead of an irresponsible devil's darning-needle," I assured him severely, "you would know that it is often a serious problem to decide whether it is best to adapt one's work to the world as it

is, or the world as it should be. Ideal work belongs to an ideal world."

This sentiment sounded well, and had a practical ring to it, so why should this irritating daimon go on to remark musingly, —

"Of course one can hardly be expected to know the result of experiments which one has never tried!"

How can he be so sure that I have never essayed the ideal life? And even if I have not, — which, of course is a libel, — how does it concern him? If I were going to maintain an embodied conscience, do you suppose I would paint it black?

I asked him this latter question. "Perhaps you would n't need to," quoth he.

For an insect who professes such joy in the knowledge that he is soulless, my daimon displays a remarkable degree of interest in everything pertaining to theology. It was only his overweening curiosity on this subject which induced him to linger around the piazza on the day when the Foolish Woman was talking with the Contrary Young Man. Ordinarily he would have disappeared at the

first hint of the Foolish Woman's approach, but when I saw him perch on the window cornice and settle down without even a flip of the tail, I knew the topic of conversation must be one of those which command his serious attention. The Man of the World was there, too, I remember, sitting a little apart, alternately reading the newspaper and looking critically at the creases in his trousers. When the Man of the World indulges himself in any ethical theories, I feel sure that they have reference to the moral necessity of having one's trousers creased properly, and always wearing the right clothes at the right time of day. If the sun ever *was* darkened at noonday,—which the Man of the World does not in the least credit,—it was because some vandal had been paying a morning call with the wrong coat on, or dining at an hour when he should have just begun to think about lunch. On this occasion he was, apparently, paying no attention to the conversation between the Foolish Woman and the Contrary Young Man, which happened to be on the subject of amusements. His soul was

like a star, and dwelt apart in a world where the thought of correct neckwear assumes its proper importance.

"I am so glad," the Foolish Woman was saying with that pretty smile which is, according to Emerson, her excuse for being, "that nowadays nothing is wrong."

The Contrary Young Man raised his eyebrows inquiringly; it is one of the disagreeable ways he has.

The Foolish Woman fell into a charming confusion, — and confusion punctuated with a dimple can be very charming. "Oh," she explained, "of course I did n't exactly mean that — that — nothing is wrong. I meant, don't you see, that I'm so glad that everything is right. It's so different, you know, from what it used to be when one had to give up all sorts of things if one was religious."

"‘Renouncing the world, the flesh, and the devil,' they used to call it, I believe," the Contrary Young Man suggested politely.

The Foolish Woman pouted, — a pout is becoming to her. "Oh, well, you know well enough what I mean, only you want to be

horrid, as usual. When I was a child people used to have all sorts of gloomy notions, about hell, you know, and endless damnation,—really, it seems like swearing just to talk about such things!—and I used to be frightened to death when I was left alone a minute in the dark. I'm sure I don't see how anybody can help feeling glad that they've discovered a nice, cheerful religion instead of those frightful old creeds, and that we don't have to go moping round all the time thinking about our souls. I should think," the speaker added virtuously, throwing grammar to the winds, "that every unselfish person would be glad that everybody's going to heaven when they die."

"There used to be something said in the Good Book about excluding 'dogs and sorcerers and —'"

The Foolish Woman raised her finger be-seechingly. "*Please* don't!" she pleaded. "I think some of those quotations are just as improper as they can be."

"I've wiped it off the slate," the Young Man assented cheerfully. "I just wanted to

say, mum, if there's nothing unspeakable about doing so, that I suppose under the present dispensation all those old categories have been called in."

"Well, are n't you glad of it?" the Foolish Woman inquired intelligently. "Do you want to go to the bad place?"

There was at this point a murmur, scarcely intelligible, from that part of the piazza where the Man of the World sat, still, to all intents and purposes, absorbed in the contemplation of his nether garments. "To the eye of vulgar Logic, what is man? An omnivorous Biped that wears Breeches,"—that is what one would have expected him to say. What he really did say—with a wink at the Contrary Young Man—was this,—

"Is thy servant a dog, that you should ask him such questions?"

The Foolish Woman looked innocently puzzled. "I don't see what that's got to do with it."

"Nothing at all," the Contrary Young Man assured her. "He was simply putting me in my own category. As for wanting to

go to the bad place, I don't know that I am especially anxious for that privilege. What I do want, if anything, is the same freedom of choice in the matter that my forefathers had. I think there ought from the foundation of the world to have been some stability of arrangement about this business; and after all the preceding generations have been allowed a degree of choice about their final destination, I call it a little rough on us, that all property qualifications, educational clauses, and civil service examinations should be abolished in our day, and we poor chaps just swooped into heaven without even having had the benefit of trial by jury."

"I don't feel sure that I understand what you mean," the Foolish Woman remarked, with a reproving air, "but I'm sure it sounds wicked. You can't possibly want all those awfully frightful old doctrines back,—foreordination, and free will, and those old things that nobody ever dreamed of understanding?"

"They're simple enough," the Young Man assured her, "if they are only presented in the right light. It's just like this; did you

ever see a man fishing for pickerel? Well, you know he baits his hook with a live minnow and throws him into the water. The little minnow seems to be swimming gayly about at his own free will, but just the moment he attempts to move out of his appointed course, he begins to realize that there is a hook in his back. That's just what we find out, you see, when we try to swim against the stream of destiny. We all have hooks in our backs. You can call it by whatever name you like, but that's the whole business in a nutshell."

"I won't listen to you another minute," the Foolish Woman protested, rising as she spoke. "You grow positively irreligious. Now there's Mr. Blank, sitting there so quietly all the while. I've no doubt he's thinking of something really worth speaking of."

"I am, indeed," the Man of the World said seriously. "I'm thinking that I won't keep these trousers. This is the first time I've had them on, don't you see, and the longer I look at them the more I think there's something

crude about the color. I don't see how a woman ever selects her clothes without going crazy. A man has certain definite rules which guide him to an extent, but a woman has to choose from such a wilderness of styles. My heart aches for you."

"And well it may," the Foolish Woman was saying as the two walked away from the piazza together. "If it was n't an absolute duty to look as well as one can, I should simply give up the struggle. Sometimes, I'm positively *wild* with it!"

The daimon flew down from his perch when the pair had disappeared, and lighted on the window sill beside which I sat.

"It is entirely beyond my comprehension, — this attitude of you human creatures toward life!" he exclaimed.

"Yes?" I said tentatively.

"Either you are immortal beings," he went on, "or you are not."

"Granted."

"If you are not, nothing matters, and if you are, everything matters."

"Exactly."

"And instead of settling the question, or even thinking about it, it would seem, you go on discussing the color of your clothes and wondering what you would better have for dinner!" Overcome by his emotions, with a tremendous swoop of the tail, the darning-needle wildly circled into the air.

The Contrary Young Man drew his chair nearer to the open window where I was sitting.

"Was it Mr. Weller who said that women were 'rum creeters'?" he inquired. "I don't remember the authority, but I can vouch for the truth of the statement. If a woman must be a fool, though, it is just as well that she should be a pretty fool. I thought I heard you talking to somebody just now."

"I thank you in the name of my sex for the complimentary tone of your remarks," I said, ignoring his last statement. "If it is the lady who has just gone away to whom you are so gracefully referring, I am not at all sure that she did n't appear quite as well as you did in the conversation which I overheard. I wonder sometimes in which religious denomination you class yourself."

"In no religious denomination at all; I belong to the biggest denomination on earth, — the denomination of civilized heathen. We're not all just alike, but we are all in the same fold. Some of us really want to know what we're here for, and some of us don't care. Some of us are interested in our souls, and some in our trousers."

"Speaking well of the absent does n't seem to be any part of your creed," I suggested at this point.

The Young Man received this criticism cheerfully. "Good work!" he commented. "I'll tell you what church I would really like to join if I could do so with the same cheerful confidence in its efficacy which I have seen some of its members display. I took a spin into the country on my wheel the other day and stopped at a farmhouse at noon, as I often do, for a bowl of bread and milk. While I ate, the farmer gave me the benefit of his conversation, and he could talk the bark off a log. He was n't exactly my ideal of a perfect man, and the things in his life he seemed to be proudest of struck me as

rather shady transactions, but I found that he considered he had a sure thing as far as religion was concerned. He spoke of heaven as if he had paid for a corner lot.

“‘You seem pretty sure about your standing in the next world,’ I said to him.

“‘Well, I don’t know why not,’ he said. ‘I was converted way back in ’69.’

“Now that is just what would suit me, — to get converted once and for all, and then stay so, no matter what little vagaries I might be betrayed into afterwards.”

“And yet, if I remember aright, I heard you a few minutes ago regretting that you were liable to be swooped into heaven, whether you wanted to or not.”

“You did,” the Young Man acknowledged; “but there are moments in a man’s history when he realizes that it might make a difference — in his own self-respect, at least — whether he entered the next world with a clean conscience or a dirty one.”

The daimon — who had, as usual, been listening — was all ready to put in his comment before the Young Man was fairly out

of hearing. "There, but for the grace of God, goes this darning-needle!" he exclaimed, jerking his tail toward the visitor's departing form. "When I die, that is the end of me, but if I had been afflicted with a soul —"

" 'To lie in cold obstruction and to rot,' " I quoted. "That does n't sound so tempting."

"I shan't care how cold it is, so long as I don't know it. Might be more comfortable than a seat too near the fire!"

I left the piazza in disgust — a mere flip-pant devil's darning-needle, whom I could crush with one movement of my foot! Why should I bear so much impertinence from him?

I was even more sadly impressed with the assurance of this mindless insect when he began to criticise man and his place in the universe.

"I gather from what I have heard on this piazza," he remarked, with his usual thirst for information, "that man vaunts himself as belonging to the highest order of beings, the very top-notch, the flower of evolution and civilization and all the rest."

"Certainly," I answered coldly, with the air of one who inquires, "What affair is this of yours?"

"And it is because he alone, thus far, has developed moral faculties that he spends so much of his time in fighting with the various tribes of his order, each superior moral creature endeavoring to exterminate as many other superior moral creatures as possible? When one member of the brute creation preys upon another, it is, as I understand it, simply the following out of a barbarous natural instinct; when man preys upon his fellow man it is, on the contrary, a revelation of supreme morality."

"Many of the wars to which you allude have been wars of principle," I replied severely; "our Philippine campaign is a notable example of this. But one can hardly expect you to comprehend principles, since it is impossible for you to possess them."

"Much better not to have principles," the darning-needle commented pensively. "So far as my observation goes, it is almost invariably the people with principles who get

into mischief. Look at Russia, now. She could n't live another second without a Peace Congress, and all the time she was getting one of the biggest armies on the globe ready for mobilization."

"Certainly; she wanted to be in a position to enforce her peace principles."

"Oh," the darning-needle went on in a few minutes, "man 's a great creature! He comes both to destroy and to fulfill, and he usually accomplishes his fulfillment by destroying. That story of the little boy which somebody told here the other day is a good illustration of the whole subject, it seems to me."

Now the story of the little boy, which the darning-needle seized so maliciously with which to point his moral, was this: A gentle lady was trying to lead to higher things a dear little round-faced boy of hopelessly destructive instincts, so she pointed out to him the great golden moon swimming through the summer heavens, and descanted to him on its beauty and the goodness of God in creating it to light the earth. The little vandal listened unmoved to her most eloquent

periods, and when she had finished announced,—

“I’m goin’ to bweak that down! I’m goin’ to take my big tick and bweak that all down out o’ the sky!” A moment later, attacked by doubts of his own prowess, he added, “If I can’t bweak that down, I’m goin’ to get my faver to bweak it down for me!”

When I went into the house and slammed the door after me, it was not because I really desired to leave my daimon in the undisturbed contemplation of man in his alleged favorite occupation of breaking down all the golden moons in the universe, but because I recognized the impossibility of explaining to an insect without reasoning powers that every great question contains within itself such possibilities of expansion that in following it to its bitter end sense frequently becomes nonsense, immorality becomes morality, and everything becomes everything else.

It was the very morning after this annoying conversation that the housemaid came to me. She had been cleansing the piazza floor, actively, as her manner is.

"Honest to goodness, mum," she announced, "I come jist within one o' troddin' on that ould dar'-needle you make sich a toime about. He don't very often be puttin' himself round under feet, but he 'd got a-thinkin' this mornin' so har-rd that he did n't wanst notice that I was in it—an' there he was, jist timptin' me to shtep on him. 'T would served him right, too—the ould divil!"

I asked myself whether I was most glad or sorry that my daimon had thus been preserved to me, and I did not know. Was I not happier before I began to see myself so constantly as others see me? Whether, I queried within myself, 't is nobler in the mind to suffer the slings and arrows of outrageous darn-ing-needles, or to take arms—or feet—against impertinent insects, and by opposing, end them?

Meanwhile, he is sitting on the arm of a piazza chair at this moment, winking his tail and inviting me to mortal combat. My spirit rises to the challenge. Come,

Hang out our banners on the outward walls!

V
THE BROWNING TONIC

THE BROWNING TONIC

I

THERE was once a time — not so long ago, either, as I would like to induce credulous people to believe — when the three editions of Robert Browning's poems which now find home and welcome in my book-cases would, had I possessed them, have been sealed books to me.

In those days — already so inconceivable that they seem to recede into a prehistoric vista — it was commonly supposed by readers in my rank and station of enlightenment that a person who made any assured claim to a comprehension of Browning was either a rank pretender or the victim of a special revelation. It was during this period, I remember, that a teacher of English in the public schools said to me rather sadly, —

“ I don't like to tell people that I enjoy

reading Browning — it makes me appear so conceited."

Even in that dark era of my existence, however, I did not consider myself so ignorant of the work of the great poet as my present confession seems to imply. I was more or less familiar with "The Pied Piper of Hamelin," I had heard the story of the good news that was brought from Ghent to Aix vigorously thundered forth on various declamatory occasions, and I had read with emotion that "Incident of the French Camp" which Owen Wister makes his Virginian hero criticise so cruelly. I should not say, if I were going to state my conception of the situation, that I had been growing up through gradations of Longfellow, Lowell, Tennyson, and the rest to the possibility of a comprehension of Browning. The library with which I was most familiar in my youth offered to a child naturally hungry for poetry a noble collection of English authors. Fed from this source I devoured Shakespeare with the avidity which one saves nowadays for the perusal of a popular novel, pored over "Paradise Lost" with the

conviction that it was rather sensational reading, laid my head upon the lap of earth with Gray, and spouted Collins's Odes to hill and sky in my lonely walks.

This was princely fare, and I ought to have benefited by it far more than I did, yet, in spite of my limitations, I assimilated something from it all, something that became a part of me, imperishable until I perish. From such a foundation, however ill profited by, one does not "grow up" to other authors, — one simply enlarges one's Olympian temple to make room for new gods,

A hundred shapes of lucid stone !

All day we built its shrine for each.

A man asked me once if I had not outgrown Dickens, and I questioned my inner consciousness to know if this were the case. Through long familiarity I had, indeed, ceased to read Dickens, but — outgrown? Does one outgrow Mr. Micawber, Betsey Trotwood, Mr. Pickwick, and the rest? Is it not rather that one enlarges the circle of one's friends to find room for them all, every one, the old no less than the new? Sometimes,

too, the high gods prove too high, or the son of the carpenter is transformed before our eyes into the King of Men.

Lucian's parable of the council of the gods and the struggle for precedence is applicable still. The dog-faced monster from Egypt with the great gold nose is, it is true, sooner or later relegated to the background when one learns to estimate comparative values, but he is not banished to outer darkness. All our gods come to stay—and a gold nose counts for something.

I can remember the exact moment when Robert Browning was first definitely revealed to me as a presiding deity.

I have always had a tendency to grasp at the pictorial aspect of things, and, as it chances, each of the group of poems which first revealed that poet to me as the friendliest friend of all is pigeon-holed in my mind with a spectacular tag attached to it.

Thus I entered the Browning country, the real land of faery where Browning is king, through the gate of "Prospice," and the gate was opened to me by a young man. He stood,

I remember, while he read the poem aloud, and a slant of sunlight fell full upon his broad brows and his rather nice gray eyes, and even lent a glamour to the exceedingly pointed toes of his patent leather shoes. He liked what he read, and was in earnest about it; he was not thinking of me, and I very soon ceased thinking of him.

The peculiar movement of the poem appealed directly to an element always easily aroused in my nature, — the fighting spirit, which may be in my case more bravado than pluck, but which at any rate knows how to appreciate pluck in others.

I was ever a fighter, so — one fight more,
The best and the last !

struck a chord that went thrilling on until the quick transition at the end of the poem, when

the elements' rage, the fiend-voices that rave,
dwindle and blend and change, to become

first a peace out of pain,
Then a light, then thy breast,
O thou soul of my soul ! I shall clasp thee again,
And with God be the rest !

There is no touch to which the hearts of men and women so readily thrill with instant response as to this touch of human love, whether it be that of the fighter leaning across the black gulf of death to clasp the beloved one again, or the Blessed Damozel stooping from "the gold bar of heaven," to say,

I wish that he were come to me,
For he will come.

Every one of us, even those who have deliberately taken husbands or wives in a series, cherishes in his or her inmost thought the conviction that under different and more favorable circumstances we, too, might have been capable of romantic love and perfect constancy. This unformulated belief in ourselves aids our self-respect immensely, and helps to put a garland—invisible perhaps, but to the eye of faith none the less decorative—around the least sentimental existence.

The motive of the whole poem, too, the courage, the constancy, the devotion, strikes with a bold hand—as Browning always does strike—that keynote of strength which is the dominant note in everything he writes.

Weakness is the only thing he conceived it possible to fear. Be bold, act a man's part and leave the rest, — above all, remember that fighting is the best fun in the world, and a man who won't fight is not worth his salt.

Let a man contend to the uttermost
For his life's set prize, be it what it will !

My next discovery in the Browning country was Rabbi Ben Ezra, a mine of pure gold from which I have been digging nuggets ever since. The personal recollection to which my earlier knowledge of this poem is joined is that of a clergyman with whom I conned it over stanza by stanza, for the purpose, as I recall it, of convincing him that Browning had written some things which compared favorably with the work of his favorite Tennyson and were not materially harder to understand.

I told him, with that modest confidence in my literary judgments which has always distinguished me, that Tennyson never but once mustered sufficient courage really to "let himself go," and that Maud, which was the outcome of this first and last indulgence, has

a hysteric note in it which would have been impossible to Browning.

"One feels all the time," I criticised confidently, "that the

dreadful hollow behind the little wood

was a great deal more dreadful than it need have been if the hero of the poem could only have 'braced up' and fulfilled his own longings,

And ah for a man to arise in me,
That the man I am may cease to be!"

My clerical friend, however, did not believe in any man's right to let himself go, and our sitting ended with a hopeless discrepancy between the lay and the ministerial judgment.

I have read this poem many times since then, and never without finding in it something strong and stirring, something that gave me fresh courage to be gone

Once more on my adventure brave and new.

In many a night of weariness and racking pain I have repeated over and over to myself, that inner self that has power over the physical being, fragments from its battle call,—the bugle call to my retreating courage:—

Then welcome each rebuff
That turns earth's smoothness rough,
Each sting that bids nor sit nor stand but go!
Be our joys three parts pain!
Strive, and hold cheap the strain;
Learn, nor account the pang; dare, never grudge the
throe!

It is true, I never did welcome each rebuff, and there was no moment, I suppose, when I would not joyfully have turned earth's roughness smooth, but since I must endure the throe whether I grudged it or not, here was something to take hold of, to crystallize around, to serve as a sting to my spiritual weakness.

If, of all our authors, we are most indebted to him who helps us to hate cowardice, then Robert Browning must be hailed above all others as the prophet of courage, — courage in victory, courage in defeat, the courage of the losing fight no less than the courage of success. One, he was,

who never turned his back, but marched breast
forward,

Never doubted clouds would break,
Never dreamed, though right were worsted, wrong would
triumph,

Held we fall to rise, are baffled to fight better,
Sleep to wake.

I have never asked, it is true, whether in detail he lived up to what he preached. It does not matter. Most of us are in one way or another born cowards, and what we need more than anything else is to be made properly ashamed of ourselves. Hail, then, Robert Browning, disturber of the peace!

While I was still in the grasp of Rabbi Ben Ezra, I was invited to spend an afternoon with a "Reading Circle," which was at that time struggling with the dark mysteries of "Childe Roland to the Dark Tower came."

They told me sadly — the members of the Circle — that they had pored over a dozen interpretations of the poem and "did n't understand it yet."

"Of course I would like to understand what Browning meant by the thing," one reader said candidly, — "that is, if he himself had any idea 'where he was at,' — but I don't see how anybody could *like* it."

Having had my attention thus called to Childe Roland, I made a bold charge at his

secrets, but very soon made up my mind that I was not under the slightest obligation to understand him. I have trodden that dark way with him many a time, have lost myself upon the barren plain, felt what he felt, looked with despairing eyes on what he saw, and when

Burningly it came on me all at once
This was the place,

I have always been sure that, after going through so much disagreeableness for the sake of arriving at the Dark Tower, only to find "all the lost adventurers, my peers," on dress parade watching to see what I was going to do about it, I should have blown the horn at all hazards. As I have previously hinted, Browning's chief virtue is that he makes one feel willing to blow horns and wave banners and lead forlorn hopes.

It was at about this period of my Browning explorations that I began to meet the Greek professor in my morning walks. The springtime had come and the voice of the turtle was heard in the land,—a condition of affairs which made it more possible for

the human voice to gain an audience. The Greek professor — who had retired from the active duties of his position — now and then joined company with me during our leisurely return from the morning errands which gave us an excuse for being abroad. He had a genuine passion for the classics, and enjoyed rolling out sonorous quotations from his favorite authors, although these gems of thought always required translation into English for the instruction of my ignorance.

One day he asked me rather mournfully if I liked Browning. I acknowledged with cheerful hope that I thought I was going to like him, though I had not yet penetrated very far into the labyrinth of his pages.

It appeared from the professor's narrative that an enthusiastic young friend "who in the inexperience of youth doubtless flattered himself that he could comprehend all mysteries" had requested him, the professor, to read "Caliban upon Setebos" — oh, the drawling scorn of accent with which this was spoken! and he was in process of offering this sacrifice to friendship.

"If you have n't read the gibberish," he suggested, "and have time to waste, — as most women do have, — I wish you would see whether you can make head or tail of it. I can't."

The next time we met I told the professor that I had ventured on Caliban and rather enjoyed the experiment. I spoke more diffidently than is my wont. I am generally most positive in regard to subjects I know least about.

"Enjoyed it!" the professor exclaimed. "Will you tell me what there is to enjoy about 'Caliban upon Setebos'?" — the old scornful intonation.

"Well," I replied, "the same element that appeals to me in all the Browning poems I know, — the daring of it, the boldness with which he puts his finger on the sore spots so many of us are conscious of and think it wicked to mention."

"Pooh!" my friend repeated, "'Caliban upon Setebos'! My dear woman, there's nothing in it — less than nothing! Now here's a little bit that I got from my Greek Calen-

dar this morning — an epitaph by Leonidas. See what you think of this," and the professor translated for me: —

A slave was Epictetus, who before you buried lies,
And a cripple and a beggar and the favorite of the skies.

"I like it," I answered, "partly, I think, because it shows the same spirit that draws me toward Browning.

"The only difference I recognize between the two," the professor remarked in his very softest drawl, "is the difference between words with meaning — much in little — and words without meaning — little in much."

I no longer meet the professor in my morning walks. He heard one day "the great voice" from those skies

Where Zeus upon the purple waits,

and calling last Ave atque Vale! to those he left behind, he went his way. It may be that in that high Olympus he talks to-day with "Euripides the human" and Catullus the beloved and Browning the brave, and there has learned to know as he is known.

From "Caliban upon Setebos" I passed by

an easy transition to "Paracelsus." This transformation scene was owing to the prophetic guidance of the Woman's Literary Club. The "programme committee" of this organization, knowing well where Genius had her home, had invited me to "prepare a paper" on the latter poem. I did not hesitate for a moment. I had once glanced hastily through the poem, and, being hampered by very little knowledge of its real import, in three days from the time of request I had delivered myself of an interpretation which solved satisfactorily—to my thinking—every vexed problem that the critics had ever raised in regard to its meaning.

I did not hesitate to assert in the most "flat-footed" manner, "Whatever charge of obscurity can be brought against other of Browning's poems, there is nothing obscure in 'Paracelsus'!"

It was a great paper. I liked the exordium of it:—

"It is characteristic of the power and the outreach of Browning's genius that it almost seemed as if he had nothing to learn from

life. In 'Paracelsus,' written by a stripling hardly past the age of boyhood, a young man standing at the threshold of his years, joyous with an Italian affluence of temperament, having never known the deep experiences, the struggles that are birth pangs of the soul, the disenchantments and failures of life, he paints the dream, the yearning, the bitter comedy, and the tragedy of the human drama as if his genius could foresee the end from the beginning, or as if he had already reached the vantage point of that

"Last of life for which the first was made."

I am not much addicted to reading papers in public,—I think, in fact, that I made my début and my final exit in that capacity on the occasion in question,—and I remember well that the electric light above my head shone with unexampled violence, and the faces of the audience advanced and receded like the waves of the sea. There were tones in my voice, too, which were unrecognizable even to myself. When I had finished, a lady, who was then serving God and her native

land by accepting the position of domestic in some needy household, took me kindly by the hand and told me that she liked my piece. Few of my audience seemed to realize that they were apathetically letting the opportunity of a lifetime slip by.

I have never been sorry for my audacity in writing that paper. I got from it for myself much that I did not know how to give to others,—the burden and message of Paracelsus, that strange, complex nature, trying at all the gates of life, striving to live a purely spiritual existence in a human world, forced to recognize one by one the physical and material barriers which made such a life impossible, hampered by the very strength of his own powers, and stooping at last to be bound by the restraints he despised, yet through strength and weakness alike,

upward tending all, though weak,
Like plants in mines which never saw the sun,
But dream of him, and guess where he may be,
And do their best to climb and get to him.

It is the same dominant chord of courage.
All the battle-cries of all the ages are in it,

and the confidence born of all the victories that have been.

A Browning notion of victory, however, does not with any necessity whatever imply the getting what one wants. It often means just keeping eternally at it, and realizing that surrender is the only defeat:—

But what if I fail of my purpose here?
It is but to keep the nerves at strain,
To dry one's eyes and laugh at a fall,
And baffled, get up and begin again—
So the chase takes up one's life, that's all.

II

I am as well aware as any one can be that my Browning explorations are valuable to the world at large only as an indication of the ease with which one can grow rich. As Captain Bunsby would say, "The bearings of this observation lies in the application on it."

If I who am but a woman, neither scholar nor critic, a shallow adventuress going at the quest in mere haphazard fashion, have been able to discover for myself the true elixir, the tonic which the twentieth century most needs,

what wealth may not lie in the search for that dominant sex which habitually calls itself "the stronger," the sex of assured intellect and logical mind, and, to speak candidly, the sex that needs the tonic most.

I may be wrong,— and if so I am willing to acknowledge it to anybody who can convince me of my error,— but my observation goes to show that the average woman of to-day has more ideals than the average man, and is therefore morally stronger. Moreover, no woman is ever allowed to suppose herself incapable of improvement. We belong to a sex that is continually being lessoned and lectured. One never takes up a newspaper without finding in it some admonition in regard to what women should or should not do. On the other hand, while our daily reading furnishes much inconsistent criticism of individual men, the evidence seems to point to the fact that men in the concrete are very well satisfied with themselves as they are. One cannot help feeling that if the entire sex could be lined up, and the question propounded to them, "What's the matter with

man?" the answer would be one universal roar of "He's all right!"

A woman, once convinced that she has a soul, can seldom be quite easy in ignoring it; a man feels sure that if he has one it is not his fault, and therefore he feels himself relieved from too great responsibility. The twentieth-century man, however, is not indolent in any sense but an ethical one. Never was there a time when more attention was paid to physical growth and culture, but a tonic whose efficacy must be assured by a more strenuous spiritual life does not especially commend itself to our athlete. He prefers ease of mind and malt extracts. He has "outworn" the old dogmas, seen the folly of ideals, and prefers to confine his attention to the things that really count. If there is another existence to follow this one, its philosophy is simple:—

Our egress from the world
Will be nobody knows where,
But if we do well here
We shall do well there, —

therefore, why bother one's self too much about a future which is, at best, problematic?

The human race has not altogether deteriorated. The twentieth-century man has in him all the heroic possibilities that any man ever had, but he is suffering from that weakening of fibre which necessarily accompanies a dearth of convictions.

The acquisition of wealth, which is the ruling motive of the America of our century, does not constitute an ideal, since an ideal implies some sort of moral earnestness. Materialism, however, is perfectly consistent with great benevolences, generosity without sacrifice and sympathy without abnegation. Indeed, in proportion as we lower the standard of that absolute strength which constitutes perfect manhood and womanhood, the more "kind-hearted" we grow, the more we deprecate anything which creates pain or demands endurance, the more we send flowers to criminals and sign petitions against the execution of murderers. We cry out against war and send delegates to Peace Congresses, not altogether because this course is "Christian," — though that is how we usually define our feeling, — but partly, too, because, like

the child in "Helen's Babies," we object to the sight of anything "bluggy."

I do not know anything which better illustrates the deterioration of fibre which is the result of an unstrenuous standard than the attitude of the American people — too large a proportion of them, at least — toward the Cuban war.

I was too young at the time of our civil conflict to pronounce with any accuracy upon the feeling of the public at large in regard to it, so perhaps I am wrong in imagining, as I always have done, that it was that of heroic acceptance and endurance, and that men and women alike felt that the best blood of a nation was not too great a price to pay to settle a moral issue forever and settle it aright.

Years after, when the bugles of war again sounded for a contest not our own, — a war of generosity to right the wrongs of another and alien people, — the response was just as ready, the deeds of heroism were no less conspicuous, and for a breathing space while the men of the country were shouting, "Remember the Maine!" and the women were gath-

ering in sewing circles for the manufacture of the flannel night clothing which no self-respecting soldier ever fails to assume before retiring to rest in the trenches, a thrill of the same unquestioning courage swept through the land.

Scarcely had the echo of the guns of Santiago died away, however, before the howl began, — the howl of the kind-hearted, the sympathetic, the unstrenuous generation.

What justification, they asked, has any Christian nation for going to war at all, especially in a quarrel not its own?

If, however, to suit his own purposes, President McKinley insisted upon war, why did he not select a country possessing a more temperate climate as the scene of battle?

If time had been given the soldiers to provide themselves with suitable outfits, could not this delay have been utilized by the government for the manufacture of sandwiches in readiness for informal lunches to be served during charges and on the field of battle? Has not a toiling and much enduring soldier a right to expect such common, every-day

recognition of his services as a hot dinner, prepared promptly, would represent? Is the "poor soldier" asking too much when he calls for clean linen and an opportunity to run up a laundry bill?

In short, the voice of the people suggested wisely, if we must have war, let us see that it is conducted regularly and in order, without bloodshed or confusion. Let physicians be provided to feel the military pulse daily and keep down all unnecessary fever in the veins.

Hence it happened that while we were taking all our newly acquired heroes down from their pedestals, and our army officers were quarreling over the division of glory, and mothers of volunteers were writing to the newspapers to complain that the tastes of their sons had never been consulted in regard to having oatmeal for breakfast, and committees of investigation were diligently smelling at all the army stores that remained unused, there were one or two more or less important facts that seemed to escape general cognizance.

It has, for instance, sometimes been apprehended that war is a grim game, not suited to holiday soldiers ; but if the thing at stake is worth the price to be paid, the only decency is to pay it joyfully without doubt or hesitation, and having paid, never to repent. Repentance, in such a case, is cowardice.

I remember a certain little boy who came home from school with a black eye and a bleeding nose and a question in his young mind whether he should weep or swagger. Just as his mother's sympathy and first aid to the wounded were beginning to convulse his infant features his father appeared on the scene.

" Did you have any good reason for fighting ? " he asked.

The budding warrior proclaimed a noble cause for battle.

" Did you lick the other fellow ? "

The other fellow had ignominiously bitten the dust.

" Then," inquired the parent, " what are you whining over ? "

Every grave on those Cuban hillsides marks

a sacrifice for human progress, and when one remembers the failures, the futilities, the disgraces among living men, who can feel that he who in the moment of a supreme impulse offered all, and found his abnegation accepted, did not choose the better part?

Life's business being just the terrible choice

betwixt strength and weakness.

It is a part of the materialism of modern life and the cowardly theory that life is worth to a man only "what he gets out of it as he goes along," that so many men spend their days in offering continual sacrifices to their bodies.

When the hero of the popular short story is not eating or drinking, he is smoking. His chronicler flavors his pages with tobacco smoke and punctuates them with cocktails. In joy or sorrow, in the most romantic no less than the most commonplace moments, the hero "lights another cigarette." Emotion unaccompanied by nicotine is something of which he evidently has no conception.

It is the same, too, with the up-to-date

young man in real life. He knows, if he has been properly trained, that while a toothpick should be indulged in only in that spot to which Scripture enjoins us to retire when we are about to pray, a meerschaum pipe is a perfectly well-bred article for public wear, and one which enables him to fulfill agreeably that law of his being which suggests that he should always be putting something in his mouth.

At a college ball game not long since where, as is usual on such occasions, clouds of incense were rising to the heavens from the male portion of the spectators, I amused myself by observing a young man who sat in a carriage near me, and who while the game was in progress smoked a pipe three times and filled in all the intervals with cigars and cigarettes. I knew something about him, and had frequently heard him referred to as "a first-rate fellow," but if anybody had asked him if he believed himself capable of a single pure impulse of the soul entirely unmingled with bodily sensations, he would have stared in amazement.

Rabbi Ben Ezra's test,

Thy body at its best,

How far can that project thy soul on its lone way ?

would have struck this young man as a decidedly "fresh" inquiry. A certain pictorial advertisement which for a long time held a conspicuous place in the daily newspapers would, however, have appealed to him at once. It depicted a youth with a pipe in his mouth, holding his sweetheart on his knee, and rapturously exclaiming as he diligently puffed the smoke into her face, "With you and a pipeful of Every Day Smoke I am perfectly happy!" Old Omar gives us a more poetic version of the same thing:—

A Jug of Wine, a Loaf of Bread — and Thou

Beside me singing in the Wilderness —

Oh, Wilderness were Paradise enow!

I am not desirous in this essay of discussing the morality of any habit, as such; I simply wish to emphasize the fact that constant self-indulgence of any kind is incompatible with strength. The Browning tonic which I would like to substitute for the proprietary medicines of the age does not inspire any man to be an angel before his time,—

it only stimulates him to be a *man* and master of himself : —

A man for aye removed
From the developed brute ; a God though in the germ.

The tonic in question is not an expensive remedy except in the amount of effort required on the part of the patient to render it efficacious, but it is perhaps a little too bracing to be taken in large doses until the spirit of it has begun to steal into one's veins.

If, for instance, the young man of the ball game should begin before breakfast in the morning with

What have I on earth to do
With the slothful, with the mawkish, the unmanly?

follow it up at about the time of his after-breakfast pipe with

I count life just a stuff,
To try the soul's strength on,

manfully swallow an afternoon dose of

When the fight begins within himself
A man's worth something,

and substitute for his usual nightcap,

Why comes temptation but for man to meet,
And master and make crouch beneath his foot,
And so be pedestaled in triumph ?

he might at first find such a sudden influx of red blood into his veins a little more than his system could bear, but, in due time, if the prescription were persevered in, he might learn to welcome the joy and the strength of the new elixir of life.

“Don’t you get a little weary of hearing life compared to a battle-field?” the athletic young man inquired when the rhetoric of these prescriptions was discussed in the family circle.

“Call it a football field, then,” I retorted. “If you are going to play at all, one has a perfect right to expect you to get into the game.”

VI
THE BOOK AND THE PLACE

'
.
.

THE BOOK AND THE PLACE

I

WHY don't you read?" the hero of a recent novel inquires of the heroine, who is supposed to be a creature of delight.

"Read? I hate it!" she cries. "Why should I wade through pages of poetry about nature when I can look out of the window here? Why waste time on some poet's impression of a storm when nearly any week in summer I can stand there and watch the swish of the rain along the mountains?"

The novel in question is one of those — somewhat rare in modern annals — whose gentle flow of narrative makes it possible for the reader to pause and consider the status of a heroine who, loving nature and loathing books, is able to look upon the world around her with something of the primal emotion

156 THE BOOK AND THE PLACE

which our Mother Eve must have felt when she saw the "pleasant soil" of Paradise stretch green before her wandering eyes, a paradise rich in hope, but untouched by memory; the emotion which Wordsworth describes as

a feeling and a love
That had no need of a remoter charm
By thought supplied, nor any interest
Unborrowed from the eye.

I am no heroine, though I would dearly like to be one, and I knew as I mused upon my sister of the novel that I should never be able to imitate her self-sufficiency. All my world of nature is underlaid and permeated by my world of books; all my world of books is sweet with vernal breezes and interfused with that something,

Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,
And the round ocean and the living air
And the blue sky.

It is strange by what process of selection — or election — we choose the scenes and memories that shall stay with us, round which

with tendrils strong as flesh and blood,
Our pastime and our happiness will grow.

Almost invariably in my life when some epoch-marking book or poem has risen like a new star above my soul's horizon, it has shone forth for me against the background of the visible heavens. From childhood to womanhood none of the libraries I have loved best have ever been bounded arbitrarily by four walls. They have been places where the morning sunlight brought a double vision, where the world without mingled itself indistinguishably with the world within; above them one mighty arch of sky domed itself over all the continents, and their windows looked alike into the Gardens of Solomon and the Forest of Arden, New England and Arcady.

II

The library where I wandered at will in my girlhood days boasted of no costly editions. Most of its standard books had been collected in the early manhood of a struggling young student who loved books and gleaned them where they were most easily accessible. There were many small volumes printed, not

later than 1828 or 1829, on yellow-edged paper, with pasteboard covers also of a yellowish tint. These had been re-covered, for purposes of preservation, with strong, coarse gray paper, on whose durability time has made little impression.

They were convenient in size, light to the hand, and I loved them so well that no other form or binding has ever seemed to me equally desirable.

It was a west room where the bookcases stood, and from its windows one saw the green Hallowell hills climbing upward toward the setting sun. There, in the old bookcases, they are still, that flock of gray books, like a flight of doves, each bringing its olive branch of greenness and beauty from the teeming world outside.

My father was a man who had decided ideas about the sort of reading which should be permitted to his children, ideas which in those bygone years of girlhood often conflicted unpleasantly with my own. Now I wish that there were more such wisely obdurate parents. There was a circulating library

in my native town, and from time to time books were added to it which obtained great popularity among my schoolmates. Once, I remember, it was "The Barclays of Boston," by Mrs. Harrison Gray Otis, that was being passed from one to another and pronounced "perfectly elegant."

When I pleaded to be allowed to read it my mother broke through her usual rule of non-interference to suggest to my father that there was at least no harm in the book.

"It is nothing but wishwash," that stern critic declared, "and the people who read wishwash think wishwash."

It was a golden Saturday afternoon in early summer; no Saturday afternoons in these latter days can be quite so fair as the old ones. There was no school, and though I might not be permitted the joy of acquaintance with "The Barclays of Boston," at least the hours were all my own to use at my will. Even one who feels herself the victim of an untoward fate need not go mourning all her days.

I knew on just what shelf they had their

home, the four little volumes that had often tempted me. I stood before the bookcase, shut my eyes, and chose. It is so hard to tell of deliberate will just what one does desire. The fates decided in favor of "The Antiquary," and, volume one in my hand, I sought the old-fashioned garden below the house.

The "August apple tree" spread out its lower branches into a seat made for readers and dreamers; it stood close beside the brook that in springtime was a rushing torrent and the rest of the year a slender stream with a liquid gurgle in its note. I knew that brook in its remotest windings; three gardens back it flowed through the neglected pleasure grounds of what had once been a well-kept estate. Those terraced lawns where weeds tangled with gay flowers in the untended beds, the dark circle of trees among which a moss-grown fountain played, had for me all the charm of an Italian garden, and the brook came to me with a fresh delight for having lingered through that spot of romance. Just beyond our boundary fence, where a little fall of water formed a pool, two bombshells that

had been brought from Key West by an old sea captain in the time of the civil war had found a permanent resting-place. They were not likely to explode after so many years of thorough soaking, yet there was always the fearful joy of dreaming that they might.

Beside this beloved brook, which had in its day served every purpose to which the imagination of childhood could bend it, I perched myself in the old apple tree, opened my book, and in the twinkling of an eye was off and away over the Scottish Border. Here for the first time I encountered the Magician of the North, to me a magician indeed, and the gateway to that land of burns and braes has always in my dreams opened out of the old childhood garden of the singing brook. Edie Ochiltree's blue gown haunts its waters still, the ancient manor house of Knockwinnock finds a setting among my neighbor's neglected terraces, and I know the gloomy hollow where of old dwelt Elspeth of the Craighburnfoot. Recent statistics claim to show that at least 100,000 volumes of Walter Scott's works will be sold during the current

year. I wish every one of those volumes might be read with as much joy to the reader as they have given and still give to me.

Beside my desk, as I write, lies a spray of purple heather, crushed and dry, yet purple still. It came to me not long ago from that

Land of brown heath and shaggy wood
Land of the mountain and the flood,

which my bodily eyes have never seen. But for books that faded blóssom would have little significance for me; by the aid of books it becomes a thing of magic: —

Though crushed its purple blossoms,
Its tender stems turned brown,
It brings romantic Highlands
Into prosaic town;
The clans are on the border,
The chiefs are in the fray,
We're keen upon their footsteps
With Walter Scott to-day.

Above that heather-decked moorland *they* sing, the warbling birds that "break the heart" because they

'mind us o' departed joys,
Departed never to return;

the air is astir with the echo of immortal ballads that thrill the pulses still, the cry of loyal hearts to the king over the water.

Wha'll be king but Charlie?

they ask, and the wide moorland calls back, —

Follow thee, follow thee, wha would na' follow thee,
King o' the Highland hearts, bonny Prince Charlie!

There bonny Kilmeny wanders with the Flower of Yarrow, and David Balfour finds Catriona and the Little Minister; there, too, the beloved wraith of him who, exiled from the land he loved, dreamed of Scotland, and longed for her, and wrote of her, comes from his tropic mountain grave to tread the heather at last.

III

There is an old-fashioned New England farmhouse which I used to know well, an unpainted cottage now seldom inhabited, sitting in a green meadow, and staring at the high-road which it fronts through wide, many-paned windows.

At the back of the house a deep lane bor-

dered with gnarled old apple trees leads to the pasture half a mile away. A stream runs through the pasture, so wide that one must spring from stepping-stone to stepping-stone in order to cross. A few paces farther on one finds the grove and knows it at once for a place of enchantment.

There is no undergrowth in that grove; only vernal and mossy sward where the lichen and the sundew and the tiny yellow oxalis weave their embroideries. All the trees are tall and stately growths, and have stories to tell; succeeding generations of birds come back year after year to the same nesting places. It is a place in which to dream nobly, to resolve strongly, to gain new surety that truth and love and loyalty are steadfast realities. One day I found that death and change had entered even that paradise. A giant tree lay just as it fell to earth, with all its crown of foliage wreathing around it. Near the base the ground was strewn with chips, as if drops of lifeblood had fallen there.

I walked along the mighty trunk of the fallen monarch, and found a seat on its broad

bulk just where the branching limbs began to make an airy chamber, whose green roof did not altogether shut out the arch of the sky.

I held in my hand a book written by one who had in his lifetime intimate acquaintance with all the deities of wave and wind, of star and cloud. If a bird sang in the far tree-tops, I could find him interpreted and glorified in the book; if the stream in its turn sang through the little valley, the book was aware of its crystal flow, and found in it "the force of the ice, the wreathing of the clouds, the gladness of the sky, and the continuance of Time;" its writer was himself one of those "strange people" of whom this book tells us, who "had other loves than those of wealth, and other interests than those of commerce." He drew all beautiful things of earth and air into his thought "as you trace threads through figures on a silken damask."

I opened the book and read the reasons why one man loved the things of nature and beauty, and why because of that love the light of morning yet shone for him upon the hills.

"He took pleasure in them"—so I read

from the open page — “because he had been bred among English fields and hills; because the gentleness of a great race was in his heart and its powers of thought in his brain; because he knew the stories of the Alps and of the cities at their feet; because he had read the Homeric legends of the clouds, and beheld the gods of dawn and the givers of dew to the fields; because he knew the faces of the crags and the imagery of the passionate mountains as a man knows the face of his friend; because he had in him the wonder and sorrow concerning life and death which are the inheritance of the Gothic soul from the days of its first sea-kings; and also the compassion and the joy that are woven into the innermost fabric of every great imaginative spirit born now in countries that have lived by the Christian faith with any courage or truth.”

IV

If it requires all this to enable one to see the full glory of the morning light upon the hills, it is yet a blessed thing to know that

intimations of that light — vague imaginings of what its effulgence may be — are given to those of narrower vision, who are only dimly struggling toward it,

Moving about in worlds not realized.

It may be a part of the heaven that "lies about us in our infancy" that children so often seem instinctively to recognize not only what is most beautiful in nature, but also what is most admirable in literature.

When I turn the pages of the Iliad now, the old Homeric tales are all penetrated with a fresher and more human interest than of old because they are inseparably associated in my memory with the picture of a green lawn where, amid the falling leaves, four little figures — two of them the dearest in the world for me — are valiantly besieging Troy. It is all very real to them. Under the big elm tree Hector parts from Andromache.

The horsehair plume

That grimly nodded from the lofty crest

of that mighty warrior is a sight to make the beholder weep tears of joy. I hear myself

told sternly, "If you laugh *this* time at the death of Patroclus you will have to go into the house!"

Near the scene of those funeral obsequies stands a great old apple tree whose arching top forms a fascinating audience room, with low, wide-spreading limbs whereon those who gather to listen may find seats delightfully insecure. Here it was, within the circle of this New England tree, that the voyages of Ulysses found at last a happy ending. The little group who kept time with swinging feet while the "oars of Ithaca"

All day long clave the silvery foam

had little patience with Penelope's procrastinating methods with her suitors.

"Why did n't she just *tell* 'em that she would n't have 'em?" they inquired scornfully; but on that day—it was in apple-blossom time, I remember—when the sad queen, listening, heard the music of the old songs floating up into the chamber where she sat apart, and called in sudden anguish,—

Cease, minstrel, cease, and sing some other song ;
 . . . the sweet words of it have hurt my heart.
 Others return, the other husbands, but
 Never for me that sail on the sea-line,
 Never a sound of oars beneath the moon,
 Nor sudden step beside me at midnight,
 Never Ulysses ! —

on that apple-blossom day we felt very gloomy over Ulysses' tardiness. There were differences of opinion among us as to whether the afflicting old song would most probably have been "The Old Oaken Bucket," or "Home, Sweet Home," or even — who could tell? — "Way Down upon the Swanee River;" but whether we believed it to be Greek or American mattered little compared with our recognition of the fact that it must in some way, however imperfect, be touched with the primal emotions and reflect the eternal soul of things. When that is once understood, Greece and New England become common territory and the minstrels' strain echoes the cry of the heart in all ages.

Not long ago I asked a grammar-school teacher which one among the short poems her pupils were taught to recite really ap-

pealed to them most. She told me that, when the children were allowed to select for themselves, the choice almost always fell on that poem of Browning's which begins, —

Such a starved bank of moss
Till, that May-morn,
Blue ran the flash across:
Violets were born!

The three stanzas of this poem are full of subtle meaning; they are condensed, crammed full of implied action, whose processes the reader must supply for himself. The children, without grasping the subtlety, feel the action and get an uplift from it. They are assisting at the birth of violets and stars, and, as they recite, their voices tremble with the fervor of the impulse.

A certain lonely road where I often drive has its entrance through one of the poorer quarters of the town. In the springtime, when the wild flowers begin to blossom, groups of children from those humble homes may be found all along the way, bending over the new-sprung grass, and filling their hands and hearts with the beauty which is nature's gift

to rich and poor alike. Even the smallest toddlers are there, their chubby fists painfully clasped around too rich a store of treasures.

Once, as I drew near the spot where a cluster of these childish faces hung over a bank thick strewn with violets, I heard a musing little voice begin to murmur,—

Such a starved bank of moss,
then others took up the strain, until at the end a sounding chorus echoed the tidings of the birth of violets. Emerson rejoices in the man who has

Loved the woodrose and left it on its stalk,
but there is another gospel, that of the gathered flower. No matter what was the final fate of those plucked violets, whether they were carefully set in water, or withered where the warm little fingers had idly dropped them, they had fulfilled their mission, — into those starved young lives

Violets were born !

I took with me on one of my drives a poor soul who has always found this world a workaday spot. I learned anew what I had often

been taught before, that it is not necessarily safe to judge people prosaic because they are compelled to lead prosaic lives.

My companion drank in the beauty of earth and sky with the eagerness of one who has long been athirst. Presently from the top of a high hill we looked down into a meadow whose green expanse was zigzagged back and forth by the silver windings and doublings of a brook. "For all the world like a silver braidin' pattern on green velvet," commented the voice by my side. I stopped the horse that the eager eyes might satisfy themselves with gazing, and in the stillness the voice of the waters spoke to us from afar.

"I was thinking of something," my companion said, "something I read in a book, but it kind of escapes me. I can't quite get hold of it."

"What book was it?" I asked.

"Well, I seem to have lost the title too. Strange, why I can't remember things. It's a book about an old sailor, and the cost mark on it was seven dollars and fifty cents. Of course," she explained, "I did n't pay any

such price for it. It come to me from a girl that had it for a Christmas present, and when her mother come to read it she put her foot down that 't was the kind of stuff she would n't have in the house. So I was doing some sewing for the girl, and she said I could have the book for what I'd done, and if I'd call it square she would. It is a curious kind of a story, but sometimes I've sat up till most morning reading it, when I'd ought to be abed too. It gets hold of me so I can't leave it."

"Who wrote the book?" I inquired, anxious to identify this fascinating volume.

"Well," she replied doubtfully, "I have an idea it was one of Dant's."

After a time the quotation she was seeking came back to my friend bit by bit, so that between us we were able to piece it together, and this was it:—

A noise like of a hidden brook
In the leafy month of June,
That to the sleeping woods all night
Singeth a quiet tune.

It was the Ancient Mariner that had held her with his glittering eye, and she had felt

his power without being able to analyze the spell.

"I always wanted a chance to read," she said, with a sigh, "and if there wan't so many buttonholes in the world perhaps life would be more worth while, — but, there! there's a better world to look forward to, when we get through with this one."

Yes, poor soul of the starved longings, there must be, there is, a better world to come, and in that world, if one may trust the prophetic vision of the Old Masters, there are no buttonholes; all the angelic draperies I have ever seen depicted were either tumbling off altogether or simply hanging by a thread. In that blessed and buttonholeless country may you, a happy Wedding Guest, find all that you have missed here on earth and — if you so desire — sit in some green nook of the Elysian meadows reading the livelong day!

V

There is a certain college library whose delights often woo me, especially during the

quiet of the vacation season. Then, in the summer mornings, I not infrequently have the great room to myself, save for the quiet presence of the portraits and busts.

The sightless Milton, with his hair
Around his placid temples curled,

often speaks to me from his pedestal, and from the shelves the crowding voices of the masters call, but the green slopes and lawns of the campus are so silent that one may hear the trees that grow close to the windows whisper "their green felicity," as if the babble of term time had never known existence and the ancient nymphs and dryads were murmuring there still.

It is owing to the relation of this library to the outside world that the silver loop of water with which the Kennebec here bounds the eastern slope takes on such chameleon shapes.

Now it becomes the Ilissus, on whose banks sit Socrates and Phædrus "in some quiet spot." The tall tree which Phædrus has chosen because of its shade is plainly visible from the window.

"Yes," he tells Socrates, "this is the tree."

176 THE BOOK AND THE PLACE

"Yes, indeed," says Socrates, "and a fair and shady resting-place, full of summer sounds and scents; moreover, there is a sweet breeze, and the grasshoppers chirrup, and the greatest charm of all is the grass, like a pillow gently sloping to the head. My dear Phædrus, you have been an admirable guide," and then he ceases to "babble of green fields," and returns to that "bait of discourse, by whose spell," he tells Phædrus, "you may lead me all round Attica and over the wide world."

Now, as if by magic, the scene changes, and it is Edmund Spenser whom one hears, calling across English meadows,—

Sweet Themmes, runne softly till I end my song;

or, perchance, the echoing sigh of Burns's lament over "bonny Doon," or Wordsworth singing by the banks of Yarrow.

From the window of this southern alcove, where one sees the full curve of the river as it plunges toward the falls, the shining stream becomes the Rhone as Ruskin saw it "alike through bright day and lulling night, the

never-pausing plunge, and never-fading flash, and never-hushing whisper."

In the golden dusk of twilight comes the fairest metamorphosis of all, for then the great mill that stretches along the eastern river-bank becomes a Venetian palace on the Grand Canal, with myriad lights reflecting in the glancing waters; there, in the vague distance, looms the shadowy bulk of St. Mark's, and in the little crumbling vestibule room, where the marble doge sleeps under the window, the last shaft of dying light falls full upon his unanswering face. Inside the library the close-filled shelves open out into unending vistas. From this upper shelf to which I first raise my eyes, the way leads to an English country house, upon the bowling green of which, "shut off from the garden by a thick yew hedge," my Uncle Toby and Corporal Trim surmount the difficulties of the siege of Namur.

"'Summer is coming on,' declares Trim; 'your honor might sit out of doors and give me the nography of the town or citadel your honor was pleased to sit down before, and

I'll be shot by your honor upon the glacis of it, if I do not fortify it to your honor's mind.'

"‘I dare say thou wouldst, Trim,’" my Uncle replies.

Farther along on the same shelf a row of faded volumes of De Quincey — faded? nay, rather let us say time-mellowed — exhale a breath from the Lake Country where their author lived. On what depths these volumes open, — depths of the visible heavens, depths of the skies of dreams!

Here is that exquisite twilight atmosphere through which the child De Quincey views for the first time the pale and silent pomp of Death; here the midnight skies of London loom with a shadowed radiance over that rare and tender idyl of Oxford Street; here, "in the broad light of the summer evening," we start from London to carry the news of Talavera to the waiting country-side. This is no opium mirage, but a glorious reality. "Dressed in laurels and flowers, oak leaves and ribbons," we thunder along, "kindling at every instant new successions of burning joy," every heart leaping at our approach. The pomp of the

night goes with us, the heavens exult above our heads, and when we meet the poor mother whose son's regiment was all but annihilated in the fight, we lift for her no funeral banners, no laurels overshadowing the bloody trench, but we tell her "how these dear children of England, privates and officers, leaped their horses over all obstacles as gayly as hunters to the morning chase," how they rode into the mists of death as children to a mother's knee.

As we read the story the old thrill leaps into our pulses, — the thrill that woke at *our* moment of victory. It was not for Talavera, not even, perhaps, for Gettysburg or San Juan, but whether the triumph were a tangible or intangible one, the uplift that came with it marked an instant of supreme emotion, and from that upper shelf in the library bookcase the whole horizon of life widens toward eternal nobleness.

It was in the alcove where the elm and maple trees stand nearest the window that I chanced for the first time on Casimir Delavigne's "Toilette de Constance." It happened on one of those dazzling summer mornings

when all the landscape seems to sparkle with light. The tall trees waved their boughs like banners, and the procession of college willows marched down the slope toward the shining river reaches, as if they celebrated a triumph. The story began with all the joy of the gay morning. There was the sparkling young face in the mirror, decking itself into more radiant beauty, impatient for the adjustment of the necklace, the ribbon, that should make a fair form fairer still. She hastened the maid :

Vite, Anna, vite ; au miroir
Plus vite, Anna !

Then the dance music began to throb through the measure :—

L'heure s'avance,
Et je vais au bal ce soir
Chez l'ambassadeur de France.

Now Love entered :—

Il y sera ; Dieu, s'il pressait ma main !
En y pensant, à peine je respire !

The toilette of Constance was finished. (Hark ! how just at that moment through the open alcove window the river plashed a liquid note of joy.) Just one more glance in

the mirror — the last! “J’ai l’assurance,” she cried, —

Qu’on va m’adorer ce soir
Chez l’ambassadeur de France.

Then — and it seemed almost incredible amidst that laughing pageant of nature which surrounded me as I read — Death entered the scene. Constance, admiring herself, stepped near the hearth; a flying spark fell on her light robe; oh, how few those breathless moments till it was all ended!

L’horrible feu ronge avec volupté
Ses bras, son sein, et l’entoure et s’élève,
Et sans pitié dévore sa beauté,
Ses dix-huit ans, hélas, et son doux rêve!

That one untranslatable word *volupté* marked the crisis of the tragedy; then came the summing up: —

Adieu, bal, plaisir, amour!
On disait, Pauvre Constance!
Et on dansait jusqu’au jour
Chez l’ambassadeur de France.

I stood this morning in the same library alcove, and the swaying boughs weaving quaint patterns on the springtime grass moved

to and fro to that old strain of dance music. The college willows, which have looked down on so many generations of youth, seemed full of the echo, —

Ses dix-huit ans, hélas, et son doux rêve !

for in those swift-moving stanzas, without one superfluous word or line, all was there, the philosophy and the tragedy of life.

When one mounts to the gallery of the library one finds a different world. Here are the curious old memoirs and biographies, the superfluous and unused driftwood of literature, the old editions that have served their time and passed into dignified retirement. In this shady nook dwell Evelina and Pamela, hobnobbing in stilted, ceremonious fashion with Sir Charles Grandison, and looking askance at Miss Edgeworth's heroes and heroines. Odd volumes of the minor poets congregate here, and musty-smelling folios where long *f's* hold sway. Yet in the midst of these worthies one may chance upon a thumb-marked copy of "Spare Hours," and, opening at random, finds himself suddenly climbing to "high Minchmoor," along the

same road where Montrose's troopers once fled. Past the great house of Traquair you go, where the bears of Bradwardine stand sentinel, and the path you tread is full of the lilt of song:—

And what saw ye there
In the bush aboon Traquair,
Or what did ye hear that was worth your heed?
I heard the cushies croon
Through the gowden afternoon,
And the Quair burn singing down to the vale o' Tweed.

And so, as you look from the high window, that silver loop of the Kennebec finds another transformation.

In the dim corner under the stairs, in a quiet, conservative, English-seeming atmosphere, long rows of Littell's magazines dwell in the shadow of decorum. He who browses here will enter many Old World homes and become acquainted with the dwellers therein. It was one of these quaint gentlewomen who first read to me—I sat on a Chippendale chair the while, and looked out upon the verdant stretches of an ancestral park—that exquisite poem of Moore's:—

184 THE BOOK AND THE PLACE

No wonder, Mary, that thy story
Touches all hearts.

Into that dark library corner she came, poor,
sinning, beautiful Mary, and lighted all the
dusk

with those bright locks of gold
(So oft the gaze of Bethany).

Here have I foregathered in the intimacy of
home life with the Brownings, the Carlyles,
and many another English writer of note,
have darned stockings with Mrs. John Taylor
of Norwich, and fallen in love with the seventh
Lord Shaftesbury in an intimacy which began
beside a humble grave in a quiet English
churchyard.

VI

Standing the other day before the shelves of
another alcove in this protean library, I took
down one by one the bound volumes of the
"Atlantic Monthly" during the war years from
1861 to 1865. The time was the 28th of May;
another Memorial Day was soon to dawn,
and here I found the whole intimate story
of the civil war, from the time of "Charles-

ton Under Arms" and "Washington as a Camp" to "The Death of Abraham Lincoln" and the reconstruction period.

If I sought a garland to lay upon the graves of our unforgotten heroes, what a splendid bouquet of verse lay shut within these pages! Poems at first hand, fresh-blooming, to be read by eyes that kindled with new and vivid emotions, —

Weave no more silks, ye Lyons looms,
To deck our girls for gay delights!

— here we begin with a whole shining parterre of blossoms. Place this deep-hued peony next: —

The crimson flower of battle blooms
And solemn marches fill the nights.

Now Holmes gathers a handful of starry petals: —

What flower is this that greets the morn,
Its hues from heaven so freshly born?

Dew-washed, we find it "where lonely sentries tread," and touch its wreathing colors tenderly, —

The Starry Flower of Liberty.

186 THE BOOK AND THE PLACE

Here are the "Biglow Papers" where Lowell tells us,

I, country-born an' bred, know where to find
Some blooms to make the season suit the mind,
and then he showers them upon us, wild
flowers that never grow tame,

Half-vent'rin' liverworts in furry coats,
Bloodroots whose rolled-up leaves ef you oncurl,
Each on 'em's cradle to a baby-pearl, —
stout dandelions, snapdragon, touch-me-not,
fire-weed, deepening by and by where a scar-
let king-cup shines, to

Wut's words to them whose faith an' truth
On War's red techstone rung true metal,
Who ventered life an' love an' youth
For the gret prize o' death in battle?
To him who, deadly hurt, agen
Flashed on afore the charge's thunder,
Tippin' with fire the bolt o' men
That rived the Rebel line asunder?

Now wreathe in a long spray of trumpet-
flowers : —

The flags of war like storm-birds fly,
The charging trumpets blow,
and

He has sounded forth the trumpet that shall never call
retreat.

Add a royal fleur-de-lis for the "Washers
of the Shroud: " —

Tears may be ours, but proud, for those who win
Death's royal purple in the foeman's lines.

Next a handful of Brownell's tiger-lilies;
cypress and rue for martyred Lincoln, to
mark where

The Dark Flower of Death
Blooms in the fadeless fields ;

then blood-stained chalices from the "Ode to
Freedom: " —

Whiter than moonshine upon snow
Her raiment is, but round the hem
Crimson-stained.

Last of all, before we lay our completed
garland upon the graves that have been green
with the verdure of many a returning spring-
time, let us pluck anew Whittier's olive bough
of peace fair as when it was first gathered: —

Ring and swing,
Bells of joy! On morning's wing
Send the song of praise abroad!
With a sound of broken chains
Tell the nations that He reigns
Who alone is God and Lord!

· This memorial wreath, which we have twined leaf by leaf from the printed leaves where it first blossomed, is not one which can be shut within four library walls. Its flowery chain links the green mounds on innumerable hillsides to the hearts of living men wherever hearts beat for sacrifice and honor.

VII

We belong to a nation of "great readers." We devour popular novels with an unflinching appetite and a literary range which extends from the known to the unknown, and does not necessarily discriminate greatly between Mrs. Ward and Bertha M. Clay.

We are fast becoming an out-of-doors people. Not only our heroines and heroes of fiction, but our "real folks" sigh continually for "the open." Nature, to many of us, is a deity to be approached with bared head, thick shoes, and rolled-up sleeves; to be propitiated with golf clubs and fishing rods; to be entertained with athletic sports of varying kinds and degrees; and in return for our devotion

she bestows on us a hearty appetite for beef-steak, and lends increased zest to a soothing pipe in hours of meditation or stupor.

We are a practical people, much inclined to believe that there are few things in heaven or earth which cannot be reduced to a scientific formula.

Yet outside this world of superficiality and robustness and "common sense" there is another universe, whose meanings no formulas can ever express, whose bounds can never be measured by sea or star or space, a world of immortalities that differs from the other as "the consecration and the poet's dream" differ from the multiplication table, and it is as true of this world as of the other that "to him that hath shall be given."

VII
CONCERNING TEMPERANCE AND
JUDGMENT TO COME

CONCERNING TEMPER- ANCE AND JUDGMENT TO COME

I

SOME years ago, at a period when I still continued to have an immense appetite for life, I suddenly, and rather unexpectedly to myself, blossomed into a full-fledged reformer or reformeress, whichever you choose to call it.

I say unexpectedly, and yet, as I look back, I can see that for a long time previous to this apotheosis my habits had been vaguely leading up to it. As a headquarters for tramps, temperance lecturers, Young Men Christians, delegates to Sunday-School Conventions, and similar wanderers on the face of the earth, my house had always been "run wide open." There was, undoubtedly, a special mark somewhere about the premises

that indicated my husband and myself as the ideal host and hostess alike for wayside wanderers and all creatures with a mission. We took them in, fed them, clothed them, — if necessary, — talked over their special enthusiasms with them, and sent them upon their meandering way with the hope — when we stopped to think about it at all — that our hospitality had in some way furthered the kingdom of righteousness.

This complaisance did not, on my part at least, necessarily indicate any really discriminating sympathy with the respective missions of my visitors; it simply meant, in most instances, that I possessed an inordinate zest for affairs, for trying experiments and taking chances. The system of moral ethics in which I had been educated was not a complicated one. Certain things, so I had been taught, were broadly and indubitably right, and other things were just as conspicuously wrong. Between these domains of good and evil there was a clear line of demarcation whose uncompromising distinctness admitted of no shading off whatever. This was a good

working theory, and, it must be admitted, resulted in a race of strong, if rather rigid, men and women. It also threw around unformulated spirits like my own an ægis of direction as useful as Matthew Arnold believed the creed of the Established Church to be to unreasoning souls. Under its guidance we went on cheerfully and blunderingly toward the light. I am often sorry that I ever began to analyze. That code of ethics which defined right and wrong with such finality, and comprehended the whole duty of man in always shoving the good onward and stamping out the evil whenever one had the opportunity, was much less difficult to follow out than one that regulates sin by the heredity and environment of the individual, and relieves him of responsibility if his skull does not fit accurately over the gray matter beneath.

In those happy bygone days when right was right and wrong was wrong I went gayly on my predestined way of assisting everybody to educate the morals of everybody else, undeterred by any morbid questioning in regard

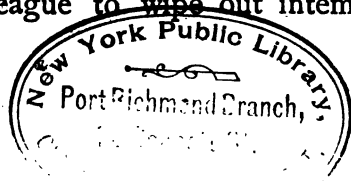
to the tenability of my own position. There was, so far as I remember, only one occasion when I actually balked at any duty which was suggested to me. A constitutional amendment to the prohibitory law of Maine was, after a strenuous campaign, to be submitted to popular vote. I do not think I knew then, and I am very sure I do not know now, just what the amendment was about, but I know I believed in it, whatever it was, just as I believe in the law itself, and shall believe so long as I have reason to think that every rum-seller in the United States would rejoice to have it repealed. When, however, it was proposed as my sacred duty on this momentous occasion to serve hot coffee at the polls, and decorate the brows of doubtful voters with propitiating garlands, my spirit rebelled. I felt sure that, right or wrong, I preferred polls where liquid refreshments were not dealt out, and voters whose brows were decorated only by common sense.

Yet all these preliminary movements were leading up to the fateful moment of the formation of the Woman's Temperance League of

Waterville. It is an unfortunate fact that the prohibitory law of Maine is sometimes violated just as the license laws of other States are violated, and some of the prominent men of the town, who were themselves otherwise occupied, suggested to some of the prominent women, who always have leisure to reform things, that the hour for such reformation had struck.

I was not one of those who signed the call for the meeting which was to inaugurate the new order of things, but I was of the number that promptly answered when the bugle note sounded. Had there been a call to form a society for altering the configuration of the earth, there were some of us who would, in those days, have presented ourselves with the same cheerful promptness, sustained not so much by our courage as by our ignorance.

We were women who thirsted for action; show us something to be done, and without altogether knowing what, or why, or how, we rallied at the sound of the tocsin. Would we form a league to wipe out intemperance?



Certainly. We had no hesitation in undertaking a little task like that.

March, march, Eskdale and Liddlesdale,
All the Blue Bonnets are bound for the border!

After all, it is by just such unreasoning courage as this that many good works have been accomplished. I wish — stay, *do* I wish? — that I were young enough and hopeful enough to do it all over again.

It had been promised by the instigators of our league — the care-laden gentlemen who had not time to league themselves — that when we were duly organized they would co-operate by joining in a mass meeting whose utterances should eloquently launch us on our career. While we were assembled in solemn conclave in regard to this mass meeting these good men were seized with sudden forebodings in regard to their part in such a demonstration. Was it wise — thus inquired the delegate who hurried to confer with us — to convoke a public meeting without first ascertaining the temper of the community in regard to the object to be accomplished?

Would it not be a politic plan to appoint a committee for circulating a petition among the business men of the town to ascertain whether a majority of them really desired to have the law enforced?

This suggestion, had it only been made at an earlier period of the world's history, would have furnished a practical precedent for Moses when he received the Ten Commandments on the Mount. "Would it not be wiser," he would, thus warned, have suggested politely, "if I first take a stroll down the mountain and ascertain what the feeling of the Children of Israel is in regard to having so many commandments unloaded on them in one afflicting lump?"

There is a great deal said about the emancipation of the modern woman. My own observation goes to show that there is no amount of foolishness to which she will not lend herself at the instigation of man. In this case our delegate had only to suggest, and we appointed a committee at once to go forth into the highways and byways and ascertain the number of those who had not

bowed the knee to Baal. So far as I can find out, a man seldom hesitates to sign a petition because it is immoral, — it is only the moral ones which he has a conscience against endorsing hastily. The circumstance of his being fortunate enough to be a reasoning creature, too, furnishes him with a large stock of hesitancies.

The lawyers did not sign our petition, because the fact that a law was on the statute books constituted in itself sufficient reason for its enforcement; the physicians, as a class, did not care to commit themselves, though one of them assured us that a two or three gallon keg of whiskey or brandy would furnish all that was medicinally necessary for the use of the community during a year; the clergymen without exception, I think, gave us their endorsement, partly because "it is their nature to" endorse such causes, and partly because they are not so constitutionally thirsty as their brethren of the other professions. Some of the storekeepers signed the petition because they thought a strict enforcement of the law would help their business,

and others declined to sign lest their interests should be injured by enforcement. All sorts of politic considerations and twists and turns of argument came into the matter. One man declined to sign because he did not believe in women as reformers. A woman's place, he said, was at home looking after her husband and her family, and if she had no husband and family it was equally fitting that she should devote herself to minding her own business, whatever it might be. When asked what course a woman might legitimately pursue in regard to a drunken husband, this philosopher opined that it was perfectly allowable for her to "shut him up." This, he stated candidly, was his wife's method with himself. Whenever he was observed to have vanished from public view for a season we were at liberty to suppose that he was repenting his sins in a state of incarceration.

The canvass, with all its humors, difficulties, and disagreeablenesses, — which latter it did not lack, — at last ended, summing up a decided majority of influential voters who were willing the law should be enforced, pro-

vided it could be done without any undue exertion on their own part. The mass meeting was therefore held, and the tide of eloquence duly poured out. Launched on this wave of plaudits the Woman's Temperance League was supposed to be amply strengthened and encouraged to be able to pursue what Amy March would have called its "Herculaneum labors" indefinitely and triumphantly.

That this was a woman's campaign was sufficiently indicated by the simplicity, naïveté, and directness with which it was conducted. No man would have dared to do some of the things we did, even if he could have brought himself to believe in their efficacy, but to us there seemed but one watchword in leading a forlorn hope: "Up, boys, and at 'em!"

There were at that time three weekly newspapers in Waterville. The two Republican journals gave us a half column each of space in which to declare our sentiments and report our progress from week to week. The Democratic paper devoted itself to candid criticism. "The Waterville Woman's Tem-

perance League," remarked a contemporary journal, "has rushed into print."

The local political situation was such that we were allowed great freedom of expression in our utterances. We were voteless, irresponsible beings with a propensity for calling a spade a spade so far as it could be done consistently with dignity and self-respect, and many a Waterville citizen went around in those days with an uneasy sense that if any of the coats advertised in our temperance column fitted him, he was at perfect liberty to put it on. The critical Democratic journal said unhandsome things about us, and being but women, we sometimes wept over these compliments o' nights. In the morning, however, we dried our tears and went back to the fighting line again. With all the crudenesses and the mistakes that can be urged against it, that period of my life is not one I am going to feel meaching about when I come before the final bar of judgment.

Notwithstanding the unpopularity of our movement,—and with a certain portion of the community it was necessarily unpopular,

— the membership of our league did not materially decrease, and even the most timid and naturally conservative women among us accepted astounding tasks with astounding courage. There never was an enterprise more fertile in stunts than this one of ours. We sat in the City Liquor Agency, to which source of supply the increasing dryness of the times drove many thirsty souls, and noted the number of quarts of alcohol required by town paupers, Saturday night invalids, and men whose wives had weak backs; we confronted the City Fathers to give them a reason for the faith that was in us; we raised money by subscription, by entertainments, by breakfasts, dinners, and suppers; we clothed, fed, and admonished the poor; we wept, we prayed, and, to keep our courage up, some of us laughed a good deal. We made ourselves very unwelcome, very much unappreciated, very much criticised; and it was, I think, this saving sense of humor which carried us through. I remember serving, with great inward reluctance, on various committees, the results to be expected from whose labors

must, as it seems to me now, have been purely ethical, consisting, as in the modern interpretation of the virtue of prayer, principally in the beneficial effects on the mind of the performer. In one instance, which often comes back to me, one of the three leaders of a forlorn hope was influenced wholly by an unquestioning sense of the moral necessity of her mission, while the other two were hampered by a somewhat ludicrous vision of its inefficacy. In the remembrance, the humor of the scene outbalances its more serious aspects, — the courteous victim, firmly resolved to be manly though the heavens fell, yet inwardly wishing that women would be contented to attend to their own affairs; the earnest spokeswoman, explaining her mission with the full conviction that only a mutual comprehension was needed to produce a delightful unity of sentiment; and the two doubters, pinching each other in the background, and trying not to ruin the situation by an untimely grin.

We wished, perhaps, no less sincerely than our companion that the kingdom of heaven might come upon earth, but the belief in the

immediate efficacy of moral suasion as a practical agent is largely a matter of temperament.

Whether the crusade of the Woman's Temperance League accomplished, on the whole, any permanent good, is a question which I have often asked myself. The movement was full of pathetically humorous phases, but it was also heroically sincere. I suppose many efforts which seem futile to us as we look back upon them have an efficacy which we do not realize, because our vision takes in so small a part of the eternal scheme of things.

There shall never be one lost good ! what was shall
live as before ;
The evil is null, is naught, is silence implying sound ;
What was good shall be good, with, for evil, so much
good more,
On the earth the broken arcs ; in the heaven a perfect
round.

When I remember the many mornings of waking to consciousness with a direful sinking of the heart at the thought that it was my melancholy duty to go on crusading,—alas, how unfailingly we see the pathos of

our own woes!—when, to put selfishness one side, I recall the fortitude of those other women more timid than myself, I sometimes cherish the modest hope that there is at least one unbroken arc laid up in the happy hereafter for the warrioresses of the Woman's Temperance League of Waterville. There is no moral reason that I know why Noah should possess the only arc—spell it how you like—upon those heavenly highlands!

II

I think the psychological aspect of the question was first brought home to me during that historic campaign of the Woman's Temperance League when I recognized the attitude of the old French Canadian women who came to the City Agency on Saturday afternoons for alcohol with which to manufacture the weekly dram of "split" that should transform them from grubs into butterflies. To them this longed-for indulgence was neither moral nor immoral; it was simply a matter of enjoyment. The magic draught furnished for them the same element of excitement

208 CONCERNING TEMPERANCE

which the theatre, the popular novel, the enthusiasms of football and baseball and other fashionable expedients furnish to better educated people. It was the alleviation that made their starved lives bearable. When they threatened to come with their brooms and sweep out the meddling women who were interfering with the good cheer furnished by the Agency, they too were, in their own estimation, leading a crusade for freedom and the rights of the individual.

It is a safe conclusion in regard to the average man that however logical he may be in mind, he is bound to be more or less irresistibly *illogical* in acts. This is because the intellectual assent is usually biased somewhat by the influence of the human qualification. Each of us recognizes the law in its application to the other fellow. Hence the reformer who really desires to get at the root of the matter should be a person of active imagination, and an adaptability which enables him to comprehend the standpoint of the individual to be reformed ; above all, he should possess no theories incapable of modification. If

he can add to these qualifications a sense of humor, a readiness not to take himself too seriously, and a recognition of the fact that the other man's right and wrong may differ in conception from *his* right and wrong, he will have an outfit which will materially lighten a thorny path. Thus much I discovered in my own brief career as a reformeress.

The advantages of a lively imagination and an active interest in other people's affairs I undoubtedly possess. There is in me also, I sadly fear, a suggestion of inherent wickedness which has always made it easy for sinners to confide their weaknesses to my ear with an unflattering certainty of my comprehension. During my aforementioned temperance campaign one kindly disposed gentleman, who was at that time recovering from an attack of delirium tremens, came to sit with me for an hour or two, that I might observe with my own eyes the discomforts attendant upon his malady.

"Do you suppose," he inquired, when we had ended a breathless period of chasing rats around his hat brim, "that any man, espe-

cially a man of my age, would turn himself into a blooming menagerie if he could help it? I guess not."

"What makes you do it, then?" I asked rather vacuously.

"I do it *now* because I have an Appetite for drink, — and you can spell it with a large A, — but when I began the cursed business it was all for fun. Well," my visitor added meditatively, "I've had fun."

Another appreciative individual called on me on his way to the railway station, that I might enter intelligently into his motives in taking the Keeley Cure.

"I ain't going for the purpose of pleasing myself," he declared. "If it was n't for the way my wife feels about it I should n't ever take any Keeley Cures. When people tell you that there ain't any fun in drinking, you just mention to 'em that they don't know. The most fun I've ever had in my life has been when I had just enough aboard to make me feel good; an' when I've heard preachers proclaiming from the pulpit that there was n't any enjoyment to be derived from the pleas-

ures o' the world, I've been tempted to stand right 'up in my tracks an' tell 'em to talk about what they understood."

"The preachers usually qualify it a little. They say there is no *true* pleasure in these things," I suggested.

"True fiddlesticks!" commented my friend derisively. "The fact is," with a sudden change of tone, "my wife's an awful good woman, and if she wants me to quit spreeing it I'd ought to be willing to please her, and I am willing. But I'd never do it to please myself."

It was at about this period, too, that I was interviewed by a gentleman of sprightly turn of mind, and gifted with great facility for unvarnished narrative.

"For God's sake," he began without preamble, "can't you, 'mongst all the discoveries you're makin', find something kind o' innocent and excitin' to amuse a man like me?"

"What would be the nature of it?" I inquired, a good deal overwhelmed by the difficulties of the task proposed.

"That's jest what I don' know," answered

my interlocutor; "if I did I should n't be askin' you. It's this way with me, an' I ain't the only one in the same case: I'm old enough, mebbe you'll say, to settle down, but I ain't settled down an' I don' know's I ever shall. There's plenty of 'em thinks I'd ought to be contented with goin' to prayer-meetin' once or twice a week, but if there's any recreation about prayer-meetin's I've never found it out. I like to read the 'Youth's Companion,' but I can't set at home and do that every night in the week. I want something different,"—warming to his subject,—“if it wan't nothing more than a toboggan slide on the other side of the river.”

“I don't see anything in the way of your tobogganing,” I commented rather helplessly. I seemed to be wholly at a loss for original suggestions.

“I don't want to toboggan all by myself. I want you to be there and all the rest of 'em standin' in a row at the top o' the hill; an' then all git on our sleds at the same minute an' slide — slide like *the* devil!”

At this flight of fancy the face of the narra-

tor glowed with enthusiasm and poetic intensity. In fancy he saw the whole circle of his acquaintance sliding like the — ahem! and he knew that the realization of that visionary transit would satisfy a long-felt want of his being. I confess that I understood him perfectly. I, too, had longed to toboggan. In his rude and imperfect dreaming he had unconsciously got to the bottom, or, at any rate, *one* of the bottoms, of the whole matter.

Starved longings, unrealized desires, overflowing animal spirits without legitimate outlet, unbalanced natures destitute of training in self-control, impoverished aspirations, — these are what lie at the foundation of the social problem which the reformer has to solve, and no remedy which does not take all these into consideration will ever be permanently efficacious. The would-be reformer should be willing to disabuse himself of prejudices, and cultivate what is known as “an open mind;” not so open, either, as to interfere with its capability for being violently closed as often as occasion demands.

When one strips the situation of phrases

one is forced to acknowledge that there are a great many people who intend to do only what they find pleasure in doing, and who do not recognize any enjoyment in abstract goodness. "You say," they tell us in effect, "that to be good is to be happy. Prove it." We cannot prove it, at least in any concrete form, and there is no sensible reason why we should desire to prove it, but no doubt we shall go on making the statement until the end of time.

There is also an increasing number of individuals who, so far from finding recreations, or even comfort and peace, in prayer-meetings, find them only irredeemably dull. If there is a steady decrease in the demand for prayer-meetings and a correspondingly steady increase in the appetite for — say, toboggan-sliding, might there not be found, gradually, naturally, and not reprehensibly, some middle ground of interest through which more prayer-meetings can be induced to consider the merits of tobogganing, and more tobogganers drawn into prayer-meetings?

It is a tendency of mankind to go on looking at subjects from an established stand-

point long after the conditions which created that standpoint have become a thing of the past ; and this is especially true in regard to questions of morals. Many people feel at once that to be betrayed into any fresh theory or admission on moral subjects is an inevitable step toward immorality. " He holds liberal views," they say, and shake their pious heads with conscious joy in their own narrowness. Yet to hold liberal views may mean nothing more than to be possessed of a willingness to search for and accept truth. If a great many people who " want to be angels," or think they do, could have the privilege ; if a good many more, who have no angelic leanings whatever, and never will have, could be removed to *their* appropriate destination ; and if the remainder, being persons of penetrable epidermis, could read their titles clear to stripping moral questions of futilities and dealing with moral conditions as they are, what an immense amount of powder might be saved !

To say that prayer-meetings are dull is an irreverence, therefore one should never breathe the thought ; to say that people de-

mand excitement and recreation is to acknowledge the frivolity of the race, hence such a craving should never be put forward as representing a genuine need of human nature: yet many prayer-meetings are dull, and a large proportion of mankind do insistently demand to be amused; and since these are self-evident facts, the practical question arises, What are we going to do about it?

Our forefathers were a church-going people, but it does not necessarily follow that they were more innately religious than our own generation. They lived in an age when the stern conditions of existence furnished a continuous undercurrent of excitement, and what was lacking in other ways was more than made up to them by the nerve-thrilling, soul-harrowing amenities of their creeds. They were believers in a tangible hell, and to go to church on Sunday and listen to a sermon which depicted each hearer as dangling over a genuine, red-hot, steam-fitted Inferno, just as a spider sways on a single filament of his web, offered an excitement outbalancing the

tensest moment of a football game, or even of a crisis in the stock market.

The man who drove his plough over a hill-side never so remote, meditating as he toiled on the doctrine that doomed a large proportion of the race to everlasting punishment, and made the election of those who should be saved an arbitrary one, dependent upon the whim of a Deity whose caprices must never be criticised, — such a man carried in his lonely bosom a whole volume of intensities. The sombre atmosphere of a creed like that was lurid enough to color the most commonplace days and nights, and lend a fearful joy to the barrenest existence.

When the old-fashioned belief in a concrete Sheol was taken out of our theology, religion, whatever it may have gained, was shorn of its most fascinating risk. "Man," says Sabatier, "is incurably religious;" he is also incurably opposed to monotony, and the faith that gets any permanent hold alike upon his intellect and his emotions must be a broad and sane Christianity which — taking into account every rooted instinct of his nature —

218 CONCERNING TEMPERANCE

makes the tendencies of both body and soul enter into vigorous and sensible character-building.

I do not believe that man's amusements will ever drive out his spiritual longings; I do not believe his spiritual longings will ever wholly root out the earthy ones. The mistake lies in the assumption that the two are necessarily inimical.

When we can succeed in developing a race of sane, sound, clean-natured, high-minded men and women, their amusements will take care of themselves; but until that millennial breed really appears to inherit the earth the demand of my buoyant friend for "something kind o' innocent and excitin'" to amuse men like him is a matter for serious consideration.

There is a certain sectarian college whose fostering church sends every year an envoy to inquire into the welfare of the institution, and to keep a jealous watch over its interests and those of the denomination. One might imagine such a messenger inquiring earnestly: Is this college educating men and women in the broadest sense of the word?

Is it qualifying them to become good citizens, wise heads of families? Are they clean, trustworthy, trained to high thoughts? Have they gained spiritual common sense as well as the learning of the schools? Above all, do you teach the youth in your charge that most significant truth that "loyalty to God means liberty for man"?

This is what one might erroneously suppose the scope of such a mission to comprehend. What the messenger really did demand to be told on a recent visit was this: Has President —— yet succeeded in stamping out dancing?

Yet if it is easy to be narrow, it is also easy to grant too much latitude. He needs must be a wise man, and a philosopher into the bargain, who knows just when to be wide as the universe, and when to stand like a wall. In a world made up of wheels within wheels and ramifications within ramifications, where everything depends on some other thing and the other thing depends on everything else, the difficulty of maintaining a just balance must be acknowledged; yet in this struggle

for a just balance lies the salvation of the earth.

We live — to sum up the situation — in a generation that has gone recreation-mad. Outdoor sports and indoor sports fill up our leisure moments, or, in some cases, all our moments. Athletics, golf, tennis, games of all manners and lacking manners rise, flourish, and decay. The race horse, the bicycle, and the automobile pursue one another across the stage of action. We play at being intellectual, we play at being religious, we play at being "tough," and all three are merged and included in being men and women "of the world."

Our best educated classes, — and we flatter ourselves that we have the last word in the matter of education, — our wisest classes are not necessarily very wise in the matter of their recreations; our half-educated brethren and sisters ape the manners of their betters, and a degree lower down in the scale the struggling masses take what they can get in the way of amusement, and take it where they can get it. In all classes, high and low,

veneered and unveneered, it is almost universally true that the foundations of appetite are too often laid in the struggle to "have a good time." The instrument of an occasional hilarity has an unfortunate tendency to develop into the minister to a quenchless thirst.

I am always willing to ask questions which I cannot answer, therefore I frankly confess that I do not know just how the balance between the prayer-meeting and the toboggan slide is to be reached; probably the chasm between the two would seem to me much less abysmal than to some of my stricter brethren. It is a chasm that will never be bridged by prohibitions alone, by persuasions alone, by sacrifice alone. Since in the last resort every thinking creature must work out his own salvation with fear and trembling, to harden him for the contest, to teach him how to grow to the full stature of a man, is the burden of the human problem. It is a problem that will never be solved by demanding unnecessary sacrifices, by ignoring vital instincts, by allowing prejudice to usurp the functions of common sense.

VIII
BOOK-DUSTING TIME

BOOK-DUSTING TIME

WHEN book-dusting time comes around, it is always rather a heart-searching season, because every library which has been gradually accumulated by people to whom books have a human interest is full of underlying memories. The last time I attacked my bookcases, fired by a periodic recollection that cleanliness is next to godliness, it was my old schoolgirl copy of "Paley's Evidences of Christianity" that opened inadvertently in my hand and served to paralyze my energies.

On one of the blank pages at the beginning of the book I found a brief written dialogue which, like an elixir of youth, in a breathing space blotted out all the intervening years and made me a girl again waiting the bell-stroke for morning recitation in the sunny classroom of the old seminary among the hills. The familiar scene lived again in my memory, — the autumn morning, full of

color and clear airs, the wide windows opening on the wonderful circle of hills, and the boy from Boston handing me, with his bow of unfailing courtesy, the volume, in which he had written in that finished, elegant script which was so characteristic of him, —

“ I hear you have received promotion on the field.”

“ For what ? ” I wrote in return.

“ From the context one would say it must have been for courage under fire.”

I ought, indeed, to have been very downcast on that memorable morning,— it was only the joy of nature’s pageant and the flooding spirits of youth, and, perhaps, the natural resistance of an india-rubbery temperament, that kept me from being so,— for, on the day before, I had succeeded, like Satan, in exalting myself by merit to an exceeding “ bad eminence.”

“ Once in about so often,” as the phrase goes, it was the custom at our seminary to set in motion the machinery destined to culminate later in a season of religious revival.

On the day in question we had found on assembling at the hour for chapel that such a season was about to be inaugurated. It was my first term at the school, and my first experience in the peculiar reformatory methods employed there. I am constitutionally reluctant in regard to making hasty promises, and constitutionally stubborn where I suspect anything like a trap ; hence I remained quiescent while invitations to rise for prayers followed each other in rapid succession, each more sweeping than the last ; and when, as a climax to the whole, " all those who desire to be counted with the righteous at the great and awful day of the judgment of God " were requested to manifest their aspirations, I still sat fast, the only sinner in the assemblage, amidst the horrified glances of the virtuous and the audible titters of the frivolous-minded.

It would not have suited Dr.——, the head of the institution, a man of much individuality of character, to have taken any immediate personal notice of my contumacy, but in the long prayer which followed I waited with

vivid interest for the petition in which I knew I should be impaled. It came at the very last. In those drawling, sarcastic tones which every student knew well, he added, as an afterthought, "O Lord, I had almost forgotten to beseech thee to have mercy, in spite of her stubbornness, on the young woman who has expressed a desire to be damned!"

Our class in Evidences of Christianity was not in all respects a usual one, though the average type of pupil was not lacking. I knew, on that autumn morning, that the conventionally pious element—they to whom complexities of temperament were unknown quantities—would wonder at my temerity in daring to face the public eye. I knew, too, that there were in the school many well-behaved young men and women who were in their hearts rather glad that at last some one had mustered sufficient courage, if not to be sincere, at least not to be *insincere*. For the opinions of the unusual element in our class I did not trouble myself; I knew that in time I should hear and be interested in them. From the conventional theological student I

should be likely to hear also. He was a creature instinct with opinions which he unceasingly disseminated.

The "big minister," as we called the other theologian, whose thoughts were as big as his body, was in the class for business purposes, but he gave as much as he got. The tall young law student was there because he loved the big minister, and also loved all discussion. The boy who sometimes brought snakes in his pocket was there because he had a universally inquiring mind. I was there because my father desired me to be. He had his own notions of what such study might do for me. The boy from Boston was there because I was. He was my "opposite" at table, and to be an opposite at the old Hill seminary was to subscribe to a relation as inflexible while it lasted as the marriage vow, though it must be acknowledged that the youth in question was of a nature to be bound only of free will. His inflexibility was that of tempered steel.

He was a merry-hearted scamp, this boy from Boston, a creature full of graceful

courtesies, full of fascinating contradictions. Sentiment and mischief strove within him mightily for mastery. He knew Mrs. Browning's sonnets by heart, nor did this knowledge prevent him from enjoying much more questionable literature. Among so many raw, untrained country boys, his graces of person and manner shone resplendent, and the other girls openly envied me the attentions which their less facile squires longed, yet scorned, to pay.

I remember well the night he asked me to be his opposite. Standing on the stone steps outside the broken alcove window, he seized my hand through the shattered pane, and bowed over it in such inspired oblivion of the circle of admiring girls who stood by in open-mouthed enjoyment of these story-book doings, that, whatever *I* might have done, he, at least, escaped all suspicion of appearing ridiculous. My room-mate, at hair-brushing time, spoke with much contumely of her own sturdy, red-cheeked opposite, a sterling but awkward fellow.

"I'd give all Bert's goodness for a little of

Louis's grand air," she said, with true feminine disregard for solid values.

So full of bounding life was he, this boy from Boston, so easily foremost in everything requiring athletic vigor, that one found it hard to credit his frequent and cheerful statement that he already bore within his supple frame the seeds of an early doom.

"I think I'll be pretty much alive while I am alive," he used to urge suavely in extenuation of some unusually flagrant piece of mischief, "because my chance is going to be such a limited one."

The professor who had charge of our theological vagaries was one of the old-fashioned variety, a product of the days of slower intellectual development and more moderate ambitions, when men studied for love of study, and to teach was in itself a sort of distinction. He was a man of strong individuality, big-headed, clear-eyed, of a scrupulous neatness in dress which, while totally disregarding changes of fashion, achieved by its precision a certain degree of elegance. His methods of teaching were as individual as his character.

On this especial morning the lesson assigned was a part of the chapter on the morality of the gospel, and dealt distinctively with "the internal evidence of Christianity," but Professor D. opened the recitation with an abrupt question addressed to the boy from Boston, who, elbows on knees, was leaning forward with dark eyes seemingly yearning toward the hills.

"If you were going to preach a sermon, Mr. R.,"—here a ripple of amusement showed itself on the circle of listening faces,—"what text would you choose?"

The boy from Boston, still absorbed in the hills, answered with unsmiling promptness,—

"I would select one short sentence from the poet Simonides: 'It is hard to be good.'"

"What do you know about the poet Simonides?" the professor questioned, still abruptly.

"Nothing at all," acknowledged the purveyor of unexpected bits of erudition, "except that he was a Greek and apparently knew what he was talking about."

"The apostle Paul said something to the same effect, and Job foreshadowed it when he declared, 'Man, that is born of woman, is of few days and full of trouble.'" The professor's voice was rich in sonorous tones. He enjoyed quoting. "Mr. M.," — turning suddenly to the congressman's son, — "what text would *you* choose to preach from?"

The congressman's son, as a member of the theology class, was wholly unaccounted for. Nobody pretended to know why he was there. I doubt if he had any definite reason in his own mind. He was an unmothered waif, who had already been judiciously weeded from seven successive schools. The boy from Boston had dubbed him "our gentleman of the seven sins," and the name stuck. He was at present precariously enjoying his eighth and last experiment in school homes. After this, — so rumor said, — in case of one more dismissal, already perilously near, came the deluge. We had all grown rather fond of that clever, dark face of his, and shielded and bolstered him on all possible occasions, dreading the final catastrophe of submergence.

A slow flush mounted through the olive of his cheek as he answered the professor's query.

"I would preach," he declared, "from the text, 'It is hard *not* to be good.'"

There was a universal stare. Nobody had ever suspected our gentleman of the seven sins of encountering just this sort of difficulty.

He grinned a little when he saw our faces. "I don't mean just what you think I do. What I'm trying to get at is this, — no fellow who's got any decency in him goes to the dogs without having times when he kicks himself. Perhaps he goes just the same, — most generally I guess he does, — but it don't follow that he's dead in love with what he's doing."

"If he keeps on long enough," the law student commented, "he gets to the place where he don't kick himself any more. A trained nurse who has spent a large part of his time taking care of old men during the last days of their lives told me that as a rule in his experience his irreligious patients met death with more equanimity than the professing Christians."

The truly-good theologian looked pained at the turn the recitation was taking. The big minister seemed unusually alert and full of interest. Even in those days he was alive to every subtlest opportunity for divining the souls of men. The professor, noting his intent look, answered it with a question, —

“How would you account for the truth of such a statement, granting it to be true?”

“Easily enough. It merely shows the difference between an oversensitive and an undersensitive conscience.”

“Miss B.,” — it was my turn now for one of the professor’s darting questions, — “if you were going to characterize the ordinary method of presenting the subject of religion to the unconverted, so-called, what form would your comment take?”

“I should say,” I suggested boldly, “that the subject is usually presented wrong end foremost.”

The pious theologian groaned audibly. Who was I, an acknowledged pagan, that my opinions on religious topics should be even tolerated? At sight of his displeasure the

professor waxed genial. "How so?" he inquired encouragingly.

"Why," I hesitated, "of course it *is* a wonderful and beautiful thing to be good, but most of the time people get so mixed up with 'Thou shalt nots' that they forget the heroic side of it. I suppose life is a good deal like this school. We're awfully tempted to break rules."

The good theologian took his life in his hands. He had a duty to perform, let the professor trample upon him as he might. "Are we not wasting time?" he asked, pensively patient. "Were we not to-day to consider the morality of the gospel, a great subject?"

There was a gleam of blue fire under the professor's heavy brows. "And what is the gospel for, Mr. C., but for the building up of man? We were to study to-day the internal evidences of Christianity,—a great subject, truly, a strange, subtle subject, the inmost significance of which is not written upon the surface of life, but to be sought for, earnestly and patiently sought out in the hidden recesses of the heart and soul. No discussion

is a waste of time that may chance to open a window into the soul of a man or woman. I claim that every human creature holds within himself greater possibilities for good than he himself realizes. I believe, sir, in unconscious goodness, intuitive Christianity, and I thank God that I do so believe. It is my business to recognize, to seek out, to develop, such possibilities in my pupils. I find them where *you*, sir, would never dream of looking for these evidences, but it is not your fault, sir, not your fault so much as your misfortune, that you are constitutionally incapacitated for viewing any subject in its entirety!"

At the close of this same week, the week of the foregoing recitation, dawned the longed-for day of the annual "fall walk."

It mattered little to the hot heart of youth that, though the autumn sun shone, a chill wind rustled the withering scarlet of the trees. No one stayed within doors for so slight a matter as the blowing of the wind on this long-expected day of untrammelled "socializing," when the sexes might mingle in hila-

rious and permitted intercourse. When we streamed down the long road toward South Pond, none was left behind. The good theologian, suppressed but unsubdued, trudged with the rest, and, in his grudging way, made holiday in his heart. The big minister swung along with mighty stride, followed by the tall law student, still discussing, discussing evermore. The snake boy gathered in a scanty autumn harvest. The boy from Boston, afflicted with one of his worst bronchial colds, croaked buoyantly at my right, although the professor in charge, the shepherd of our flock, chose persistently to linger in our company.

It was our only unrestricted day for the whole term, yet no one would have supposed from the gallant bearing of my facile opposite that he found the good professor's presence unwelcome. He—the boy from Boston—had missionary relatives whom, one would judge from his ordinary conversation, he did not estimate according to their full excellence. Yet, as it seemed to-day, he had nevertheless taken in at the pores much picturesque information about Burmah. He charmed the

attendant professor; the good theologian unwillingly drew near, drawn in spite of himself; the big minister joined our group; the law student, forced to cease arguing, listened to the croaking voice that unfailingly seized the salient point of each situation. We, the unworthy ones, proceeded on our pondward way haloed and girt about by an assemblage of the good, and once, only once, did I detect an irreverent twinkle in the dark eyes of the boy from Boston.

When we had reached our destination, and most of our group were participating in a lively scramble for needed firewood, the professor, watching an agile figure always in the midst of the fray, commented absentmindedly to whomever it might concern:—

“A fascinating personality—most fascinating! Such life, such courage, such buoyancy in spite of discouragements, such unfailing grasp of whatever he touches—but complex, most complex! I hardly know whether to count him most strongly for good—or—or otherwise.”

“Louis? I count him for good,” the candid

girl pronounced uncompromisingly. She was always ready to answer questions. "He's the fussiest boy in this school about the way girls should behave."

"Yes, yes," the professor mused, still in a psychologic mist, "he naturally obscures the feminine judgment."

It was later in the day, after our dinner had been served, that things came to a climax. Ordinarily my opposite and myself would have been wandering far afield with our free-footed comrades, but on this special occasion that hoarse note in his voice had kept us hovering near the fire, though the anxiety was mine, not his.

Our camping-ground had been chosen near the outlet, where a strong current swept into the turbulent and rocky stream connecting two ponds. The orphan, who throve on mischief, was just now choosing to amuse himself by poling about on a large, floating log. To awaken disquiet was the orphan's normal air. The fact that he could not swim only gave poignancy to his joy.

The orphan was a red-haired imp of parts.

He had no visible means of support, yet managed to exist because we all stayed him with flagons and comforted him with apples. In fact, so universally did we maintain one purse with him that the only care remaining on his mind was that of giving us enough trouble for our money. In the midst of admonitions, instructions, and objurgations he placidly continued to pole, and in the natural excitement of watching him prepare to drown, the little group left on the shore fell to discussing its swimming powers.

It seemed that our gentleman of the seven sins was a good swimmer, but always subject to violent cramps except in the mildest of summer waters. The boy from Boston loved to swim, but was forbidden "because of his beastly chest." The snake boy could swim six strokes. The candid girl knew how to float. The ever-watchful professor used to swim a little when he was a youngster. The good theologian could swim anywhere, at all times and seasons.

At this point the page of history and narrative suddenly left a blank for illustration.

The pole slipped, the treacherous log rolled to leeward, and the orphan, with a wild whoop of exultant anguish, disappeared into the flood. The boy from Boston was temporarily absent on a search for more wood; the good theologian, the expert swimmer, stood rigid on the shore as if violently petrified, but the congressman's son, he to whom chill waters always brought cramps, hesitated not the twinkling of an eye. Coat off, his swift plunge into the rapid water seemed coincident with our next breath. We saw him seize the orphan's red crest just as it came to the surface, saw him strike out boldly for the shore; then, while our hearts froze within us, he began to waver and struggle, and had it not been for the boy from Boston, who, tearing off his coat as he ran, plunged in his turn just in time to save the situation, those two white faces would have gone together sweeping down the chill current of death. The last comer, whose agile intelligence seemed always prepared for emergencies, knew where to turn in the search for shallow waters, and it seemed, after all, but the space of one long heartbeat

before swift help came, feet flying from all directions, and the three drenched and gasping heroes of the scene were drawn safely on dry land and hustled off to the nearest farmhouse, the orphan gurgling and sputtering in a sort of irregular rhythm all the way.

When the last wild gurgle had faded into silence, the candid girl turned to the theologian, who, waking to life once more, seemed to be making tentative experiments in the use of his component parts.

"What was the matter with you about that time?" she inquired, with her usual unflinching frankness.

The theologian looked pale but firm. "I remembered," he said stiffly, "that mine was a consecrated life."

"Consecrated fiddlestick!" the candid girl commented with decisive finality.

Two days after these happenings, when we met for our next regular recitation, the class in Evidences of Christianity presented its full complement of members, and the occasion would, perhaps, have proved but an or-

dinary one, had it not been that the good theologian, who was evidently having difficulty with the somewhat lumbering machinery which he called a conscience, evinced a determination to discuss past issues.

"I suppose," he said, addressing the professor with an air of patient gravity, "from the remarks thrown out by you at our last recitation, that you would consider the intuitive acts of unsanctified persons — such acts, for instance, as resulted in the rescue of young Blake on Saturday — as constituting in themselves internal evidence of the existence of what you would term unconscious Christianity in the minds of the actors."

"It was not my intention, Mr. C.," — the professor spoke a little sternly, — "to have referred to this matter in the class, although personally it would give me nothing but pleasure to do so, because I felt sure that the principal participants in that rescue would very much prefer to escape public mention, but since the subject is forced upon me, I say this: Both those young men, by the intuitive

acts to which you refer, risked their lives twice over. The one made the plunge with the full knowledge that he would probably be seized with fatal cramps, the other was in a physical condition which rendered such an immersion in icy water a deadly peril. I ask *you* whether you would consider that such sacrifices of self, sanctified or unsanctified, make for *un*righteousness?"

Our gentleman of the seven sins interposed gruffly, "There was n't any Christianity or righteousness about the business. There was only one thing to do. Any fellow would have done it."

"I jumped in for my health," the boy from Boston declared in a cheerful croak. "Cold's been better ever since."

The professor smiled, but his smile was a grave one. "When we consider what might have been the outcome of the accident, young gentlemen, the matter is hardly one for jesting, and," turning to the good theologue, "if any member of this class feels disposed to underestimate such intuitive acts as were here displayed, I would ask him to call to

mind the statement of his Master and mine :
'Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.' "

With such utterances as these fresh in our minds, we felt it rather a blow when, at the close of the recitation hour, we heard the professor request our gentleman of the seven sins to come to his house that afternoon.

Owing to his peculiar dignity and the influence which he exerted in the school, it often became the professor's task to prepare victims for the pangs of execution, and we knew, alas ! too well we knew, that the congressman's son had been diligently and feloniously abstracting himself from the "special meetings " which were nightly going on.

All the afternoon, as the manner of such critical seasons was, parties of anxious youths scouted and reconnoitred in the vicinity of the professor's house, and yet the object of their solicitude appeared not. Finally, as dusk drew on, the snake boy, characteristically ready to obtain information at whatever personal sacrifice, volunteered to conduct a forlorn hope. "I'll make an arrant," he said,

and having made it, hastened it to its destination.

It was in that bygone epoch when amateur craftsmen all over the country were busy sawing out ornamental shelves and brackets and designing hollywood frames. The professor, who possessed a very pretty mechanical turn, had set up a workshop of his own. Hither, seeing a cheerful light, the snake boy directed his steps. The door stood a trifle ajar, and the seeker after information was able to gratify his curiosity without betraying his presence. At one end of the bench sat the professor, at the other the congressman's son, both busily at work. Ever and anon there came to the cautious listener sounds of amicable conversation, assuring himself of which fact, he beat a masterly retreat.

"It's all right, fellers. May as well quit watchin'. The professor's jest found a strawberry mark on ole Seven Sins's arm, and there ain't any talk of an eighth sin this time."

After this, it became a regular occurrence for the professor and the congressman's son

to carve and jig-saw in company on Saturday afternoons, and as a result of this odd copartnership, more than for any other reason, it chanced that our gentleman of the seven sins never added his crowning offense.

On book-dusting morning, when I sat with the worn volume of Paley's "Evidences" in my lap, living over the former days, it was as if I had reopened a familiar tale to which the years had added a sequel.

I know that the beloved professor has long ago finished his work in the world of the actual, a world that can ill spare him and his like. I know that the snake boy has made his inquisitiveness tell in the realm of natural history. I know that the candid girl, an excellent wife and mother, is also active in good work in the community where she lives. I know that the tall law student has made his mark in a great city, and that the big minister has never ceased to enlarge his borders.

What a glorious sermon on immortality was that which I heard him preach! How

wonderfully from the arc of mortal life he drew the circle of eternity!

The good theologian, too, is preaching still. I meet him sometimes, grown rotund, and no less self-satisfied than of old. It was our gentleman of the seven sins who, several years ago, was elected reform mayor of his city. If one may believe the current newspapers of the time, he "made good." That turning-lathe of the professor's proved the turning point of a life.

The boy from Boston also made good. He went as buoyantly and lightheartedly to the grave as if death were but a bubble on a foaming cup. It was on a May night that he slipped away into infinity,—there is a story about that, too,—and when I think of the mound in Mount Auburn which I have never seen, I always fancy that the happiest May-time breezes are playing there.

How the stars shone that night to light him on his way! and he "greeted the unseen with a cheer."

IX

EDUCATION

EDUCATION

I

ONCE before, many years ago, I sat down at my desk and wrote the caption "Education" large at the head of my page. I was then sixteen years old and I should probably have called that humble sheet of paper my "virgin page" had I found it necessary to give it a local habitation and a name.

The master spirit who was at that time directing the trials and experiences of the Hallowell high school had the kindly habit of furnishing as a gift the subjects for our fortnightly "compositions;" delightfully easy, obvious subjects such as "The Pleasures of Memory," "The Advantages of History," and kindred topics suited to the capacity of youthful minds. At sixteen, one naturally knows a good deal about the pleasures of memory; the advantages of history unfold themselves to

the most casual observer, and Education — with a large E — has already begun to rasp itself in indelible lines upon the tender imagination.

I am pleased to know, by reference to the battered old "composition book" which lies open before me, that even at that period of soaring ambition, that halcyon period when I "woke in the morning with an appetite that could eat the solar system like a cake," there was something about the all-pervading and all-comprehending nature of this latter topic which made me hesitate.

"Education is a boundless subject," thus the theme opens, "and, so wide is the field which spreads itself before me, that I hardly know where to begin." Once started, however, all obstacles were triumphantly swept away and the whole question brought to such a triumphant conclusion that I have never, until this fateful morning, felt it necessary to tackle it again. Alas, I know beforehand just how lamely, illogically, and inconsistently I am going to conduct this second excursion into that spreading field!

My past reticence, fortunately, has not been shared by other writers, better qualified to pursue the problems of education into their fastnesses than I can ever hope to be, and I have read their pregnant and instructive pages with deep and ever-growing interest. The meaning of the word, the methods of interpreting that meaning, who shall be educated, when, where, how, and why it shall be done, the question of discrimination between sexes, between classes, between tweedledum and tweedledee, all these, variously and eloquently and interminably set forth, have passed in an endless phantasmagoria before my mental vision only to leave my stubborn mind set like a rock on one conclusion : The wisdom of educating every living creature, man, woman, child, fish, flesh, fowl, to the limit of individual capacity; and to this conclusion I should add the conviction that there is no danger whatever that any creature will ever know — really and absolutely *know* — too much.

It is true that I have not yet removed the beam from my own eye, but I am still able

to discover the mote which obscures my brother's vision. I realize — or I dimly dream that I realize — the deficiencies of my own education, but much more plainly I perceive that my cook would be benefited by a knowledge of the higher mathematics, classical literature, and the philosophy of history. It may be argued that if she possessed these acquirements my kitchen would not contain her, but, even if the scheme of universal education were carried out, there must still be cooks, and what sane, sanitary, hygienic, æsthetic, reasoning and reasonable possibilities might be looked for from a race of enlightened queens of the kitchen — central suns, around which the whole domestic system must revolve.

The typical cook of the average New England town lives, moves, and has her being entrenched behind one axiom of precedent: the thing which, in her experience, has been done, can be done again. After this, the deluge.

It may be, for instance, that the domestic goddess in question served her first appren-

ticeship in a family of ten. For the consumption of such a family she was in the daily habit of preparing twenty potatoes in one or another form. When, during her subsequent peregrinations, she condescends to minister to my modest home circle of three persons, I sometimes assure myself that if to a knowledge of elementary arithmetic she could add a thorough understanding of higher algebra, geometry, and trigonometry, and then super-add some slight acquaintance with differential and integral calculus, she might in time be able to discover that if ten persons require twenty potatoes, by the same ratio of allotment three persons might be satisfied with six.

In the present fragmentary state of domestic education, however, the situation is a hopeless one. It is in vain that I present myself periodically before the dispenser of vegetables to suggest that but three consumers of potatoes sit at our festal board, that no one of the three is afflicted with an inordinate appetite for that starch-laden esculent, that a wise economy prohibits waste. Arithmetic and politi-

cal economy are alike thrown away upon one who has but a single formula, unchangeable as the decrees of the Medes and Persians, by which to regulate the conduct of life.

I suggest six potatoes, a modest and satisfying half dozen. The arbiter of fate replies, "You see, ma'am, I've always been accustomed to cookin' twenty" — and twenty it is!

Hence it comes that there have been few periods during my housekeeping career when I have not been provided with a sufficient number of cold potatoes to answer any sudden demand upon hospitality. No friend ever needed to pass potatoless from my door.

Yet if it fell to my lot to prepare a civil service examination for aspiring domestics there is only one point on which I should insist. I would not require any candidate to know beyond a peradventure why Bedredan Hassan did or did not put pepper in his cream tarts, but on him whose comprehending soul could grasp the idea that the problem of satisfactorily adding pepper to cream tarts need not be an insoluble one, I would without hesitation confer a degree.

Pepper tarts do not appeal to me, but the instinctive realization that to genius all things are possible does appeal. It opens flowery visions of a domestic possessing no fixed standards on the subject of potatoes, an "expedientful" person to whom the mixing of a cake with three eggs when the recipe calls for four would not present insurmountable difficulties.

It is true that no amount of education will cause wings to sprout on those who are born absolutely wingless, but the most unpromising grub may conceal within its ugly breast the possibility of transformation, and surely no harm can result from seeking everywhere the hidden spark of divinity. Imagination helps to season the soup and decorate the salad, and one may weave the banquets of Lucullus, Nero's roses dropping from the ceiling, the magic pitcher from which Baucis and Philemon drew their never-failing fount, John the Baptist's locusts and wild honey, Charles Lamb's roast pig, the red wine which Omar's nightingale cries unto the rose, and that draught of clear water from the well of

Beth-lehem for which David thirsted, into a background that expands the narrowest kitchen wall into a vista of memory and romance.

II

We have become so accustomed to shouting at the top of our lungs the assertion that this is an age of progress that most of us have come to an unquestioning belief in the reality of what we announce. It is, indeed, true that there never were so many schools, so many colleges, so many facilities for doing special work, such opportunities for learning made easy as exist in our day; but the test of what any system of education is doing for its age lies rather in what it has accomplished for the mass than for the individual.

If the progress of the last century has given us better domestic service, better mechanics, better teachers, more thorough and practical scholars, better and wiser all-round men and women than those who played their part in former generations, if the trend of the race has been genuinely upward, then it must

be acknowledged that we can with clear consciences continue to vociferate our claims to advancement.

I hope I am neither a pessimist nor a cynic in regard to the achievements of latter-day civilization; I am ready, as a rule, to hurrah for my own side, but I am not prepared to profess an unqualified surety that the progress of the last century has been wholly in the right direction.

In this matter of domestic service, for example, it would not be a difficult business to collect a sheaf of testimonies from housekeepers who are able to remember the changes of the last fifty years, certifying that the thrifty, capable, and reliable "hired girl," with whose virtues and usefulness so many New England households have in former days been happily familiar, no longer exists except in infrequent and sporadic instances.

The younger class of girls who, under the old régime, went out to service, now employ themselves in the shops, factories, and similar establishments where their time, after working hours, is their own. Like Yankee Doodle

they have "put feathers in their caps" and to this adornment have added whatever stands, in the vogue of the day, for the "rings on their fingers and bells on their toes" of Mother Goose memory. They know the sweets of independence and the proud, if imaginary, satisfaction of being "just as good as anybody." The domestic ranks in the New England towns of to-day are largely recruited from a wandering tribe of more mature women who vary the serial of matrimony by divergences into the field of "working out." Some of them belong to the variety known as "grass widows," some of them have either just "got a bill" or are just about to get a bill from their husbands, some have husbands who appear spasmodically and then pass once more into obscurity. During the intervals of these interrupted romances the heroines of them bestow a somewhat intermittent and perfunctory attention on households whose need is so urgent that the members therefore are willing to suffer and be strong.

"I don't need to work out," one of these

culinary heroines was wont to murmur pensively; "ever since I parted from William there's been plenty o' men willin' to marry me any mornin' before breakfast,"—and this statement represents the strongest kind of willingness, since many a man who could easily be beguiled into wedding after supper would in the clearness of morning judgment hesitate about delivering himself over to the chains of Hymen !

The old-fashioned semi-patriarchal system which permitted the "help" to become an integral part of the family, presents many objectional features, yet the natural and logical result of such relations between employer and employed was to secure a better and more intelligent class of service.

There was a certain neat, spare, gauntly decorous, middle-aged woman who, during my girlhood, always spent a part of each year "helping out" in our crowded household, whose memory retains for me an abiding fascination. She exemplified a type which had in those days many representatives, a type of woman strong both in mind and body, with

an untutored intelligence born of necessity and experience. These women were apt to be sharp-cornered, full of individuality, incisive of speech and act,—a surface ungraciousness which did not long conceal a repressed sweetness of nature, often the outgrowth of deep and conscientious religious feeling. It was always a gala day to me when "Aunt Sophia" came to abide with us. It meant that there would be things doing, fresh interests added to life, interests more or less piquantly flavored with the new-comer's individuality. Aunt Sophia's sharp sayings, her idiomatic stories gathered from experiences in many households, the very unexpectedness of her standpoints, all helped to flavor the commonplaceness of daily living; and though I have spoken of her and her class as creatures of untutored intelligence, in comparison with many of the flippant and shallow beings who inhabit our kitchens to-day these old-fashioned domestics were admirably educated. Sophia drew her intellectual sustenance from a fount of classical English, pure and richly varied literature,

and deep spiritual information. She read her Bible as eagerly as her prototype of to-day reads Bertha M. Clay's novels, and from it she gained the knowledge of those mysteries which God has hidden "from ages and generations," but makes manifest unto his saints.

It often seems to me that the world of my girlhood was a simpler, more dignified, more genuine world than that to which our age of progress has advanced us to-day. It was a striving world then as now, a faulty, narrow-minded world, yet many of its common people were less radically common than the same class of the present generation, simply because they were more diligent students of the Bible, because they built and founded themselves more broadly on the influences and inspirations of that wonderful classic.

It may be that in my recollections I somewhat idealize the virtues of that former generation, but I do not idealize the simple homes which made no pretense of being what they were not, the homes where a narrow income was not a thing to be ashamed

of, where thrift and economy were held as praiseworthy virtues, where a good many daily joys were somehow compatible with a rather strenuous notion that life was duty.

I have said, and I repeat, that I would be willing to educate every human and inhuman creature up to the limit of what is to be known ; but if a man cannot know all about Confucius and Aristotle and Shakespeare and Darwin, the Zend Avesta and the Nibelungenlied, if his literary and ethical study is to be limited to the assimilation of the contents of one volume, I would place in his hands that one which in Scotland used piously to be referred to as "the Book" and feel that, after all, I had given him material for a liberal education. He might search its pages for the building up of creeds, for the confirmation of prejudice, for the foundation of dogma ; but if he continued to search with any right-minded desire to discover the truth of things, in spite of creeds, in spite of prejudices, in spite of dogmas, he would find himself broadening and sweetening, and breathing the air of purer horizons.

It is rather the fashion nowadays to pride one's self on knowing little about the Bible, just as it is the fashion for men to shake their heads with dissimulated pride while they aver that they do not profess to be religious. Many people seem to feel that to disclaim all pretensions to the knowledge of any but the material side of life, serves in some mysterious fashion to rid them of moral responsibility. There are some men who apparently have the idea that to mention the name of God, except by way of oath or adjuration, is an uncalled-for exhibition of pious priggishness; yet the most untutored pagan, however primitive his creed may be, who is so far from being ashamed of his religion that he would rather be ashamed of not possessing one, has a deeper hold on the foundation structure of all education than such men as these. He at least recognizes something which binds him morally, however mistaken his conception of morals may be, and the recognition of moral boundaries is the corner stone of the highest civilization.

III

A group of bright young fellows discussed in my presence not long ago the accepted standpoint, according to twentieth-century ideals, from which a man should pursue his chosen profession. From this conversation it appeared that the aim in view was to secure the largest possible income in the shortest possible time.

Talent, application, strenuous work, all had their value in the struggle, as enabling the aspirant more speedily to obtain recognition in an up-to-date generation which gives prizes only to the concrete.

As I listened I learned that a political career is a mistake because, unless a man gets hold of, and is willing to profit by, a graft of some description, his honors bring him more outlay than income. The judge's bench is tabooed for the truly ambitious because of the straitened salary which restricts its emolument. To accept a position, however flattering, in any branch of the teaching profession, is to limit one's chances for making money.

To enter the ministry is an absurd proposition for a man who is capable of gaining a competency in any other profession, since the best-paid clergyman cannot, according to modern standards of wealth, hope to become a rich man.

I confess that it surprised me to find these clean, well-balanced, carefully trained youths turning their backs so doughtily on the record of past values as estimated by what the ages have found vital enough to preserve, to seek the choicest rewards of life in things that perish with the using. They *were* young, these prematurely wise boys; I doubt if any one of their number wholly meant what he said, and some of them, I am very sure, cherish in their hearts higher ideals than their careless speech revealed. The significance of their talk lies in its expression of the spirit of the age, a spirit which one finds only too frequently embodied in both the speech and act of older and riper men who have, it would seem, lived long enough and deeply enough to know something about what life can take away as well as what it can give.

Religion and patriotism and good sense and good government and final profit are all against this sort of thinking which makes only for ultimate rottenness. A cloud of witnesses, giants of the past, who have known alike the life of soul and sense, protest against it. As an expression of the spirit of a century which claims to have opened the doors of enlightenment to rich and poor alike, such standards are utterly trivial and uneducated.

I found last year in an old chest, which had been long hidden away in my father's attic, a bundle of letters written to a young man who entered upon student life in Bowdoin College about the year 1830. The young scholar was evidently an open-hearted and versatile-minded fellow, of a temperament which opened to him a large circle of friends. These friends all wrote letters, and as they lived in a day when transportation was difficult and postage high, their epistles were generally lengthy ones. Although the student himself was a struggling youth whose college career was prolonged by the necessity of earning money to pay his expenses, he repre-

sented a prominent family, well known and much respected throughout the county which is now thickly sown with descendants from its various branches.

I know from household tradition something about the circle of young friends whose faded letters made up the treasure-trove of the old chest. They, too, were scions of eminently worthy families in a day when hard work and struggle were regarded as a necessary and to-be-expected portion of everyday life, and when it was no disgrace to acknowledge an habitual scarcity of available cash.

The Bowdoin student was the only college man in his circle, much envied and much felicitated for his position and opportunities. It was universally expected that he would, as a result of much learning, rise to a lofty rank in life; but when his companions set before him examples for his emulation they most frequently selected the triumphs of Webster and Clay, or suggested the name of some eminent divine. To urge him on in mere money-making was far from their thoughts.

The young men whose letters were thus

preserved represented varying occupations. One, according to his own definition, was "a wielder of the yardstick," two were post-office clerks, several were teachers of country schools, one a farmer lad who during the winter helped his father to manufacture shingles. The young women also taught school, did sewing, or even, in emergency, assisted in housework.

After the fashion of their century the young creatures poured forth their sentiments, their reflections, their aspirations, without stint. They described sunsets and moon-rises; they philosophized regarding everything that pertained to life; they referred darkly to hidden griefs; quoted from Byron, Moore, and kindred poets; analyzed the passion of love from depths of profound experience; gave synopses of sermons and political addresses; and by and by, when these mighty topics had been exhausted, devoted a page or two to local gossip and the discussion of social functions. It was a humble epistle indeed that did not glitter with classical allusions. But through all their commonplaces

and crudenesses, these letters revealed in strong light the standpoint of aspiration held by the youth of that period, a standpoint based on the conviction that knowledge is power.

In the evenings, in the odd moments between other avocations, they were all taking courses of study. The young man of the yardstick was translating Cicero and Sallust and studying astronomy; the post-office clerks were writing lyceum lectures on abstruse topics; one of the teaching young men was studying moral philosophy and different systems of theology, "not with any idea of entering the ministry, but because he had a natural bent for such pursuits;" the farmer lad was dividing his leisure between church-going, village festivities, "back-lot dances," and reading the English poets and essayists during otherwise unoccupied winter evenings.

He tells his correspondent that "making shingles in the sunny corner of the old workshop is an occupation that lends itself readily to the weaving of many dreams," and as one

reads the faded sentences one feels how the tides and the yearnings of youth flooded that sunny workshop corner. I remember this writer, the intimate picture of whose daily life is an especially graphic one, as a tall old man of stern face and erect military bearing. As a child I often visited in his home, but I never dreamed of him as capable of such a record of ardent young manhood as his letters reveal.

The girls were studying too; going to school at the "Academy" between periods of teaching; "keeping up their Latin" while the teaching was going on. The sewing girl "went on with French whenever she could borrow a dictionary" and rejoiced greatly at unexpectedly securing several odd volumes of Shakespeare.

In the same paper-covered chest I found also the records of The Franklin Debating Society, formed in 1822 by the printer's boys of a New England town. The membership of this society was later augmented by the addition of a number of clerks and mechanics.

One of the debaters, who shared in the benefits of this club, says of it in relating the story of his life :—

“ We got leave to occupy the second story of the Old South schoolhouse. We furnished our own wood and lights. We wrote compositions, we declaimed, debated questions of importance and enacted dialogues. Our compositions were corrected by an educated man. This society, with a succession of members, continued for four or five years, meeting once a week. With two or three exceptions all of us have closed our earthly career, but if none of us ever rose to be great men, not one became vicious or dissipated.”

The society records, kept in an eminently neat and businesslike manner, give account of one hundred and eighteen meetings, with debates, addresses, essays, and reports of committees on all sorts of topics, civil, religious, literary, etc.

I copy a few of the questions for discussion to show what these youths, hardly past the age of boyhood, were voluntarily thinking and talking about :—

What are the advantages of a free republic over a hereditary kingdom ?

Should deistical and atheistical writings be prohibited by law ? Answer : No.

Should imprisonment for debt be abolished ? Answer : No.

Which is most essential in the representative of a free people, integrity or talents ? Discussion continued during two meetings ; final answer : Integrity.

Can any measure be taken to rid America of slaves ? Majority vote : Yes.

It is interesting to note that the reply to the question : In what capacity is a woman useful ? was indefinitely postponed, also that the votes were divided about evenly in answering the inquiry : Should the sexes receive education in common ?

The eleventh chapter of the first book of Chronicles is one which I often read because of its epic flavor. It is, indeed, an epic and a lyric in one, this story of David's "mighty men." Thirty of them there were, all captains, all doers of deeds ; but twenty-seven of these heroes, although they had honorable

mention among the thirty, "attained not to the first three."

Some of these second-rank men were rather capable fellows — Abishai the brother of Joab, for instance, who lifted up his spear against three hundred and slew them; Benaiah the son of Jehoiada, too, who slew two lionlike men of Moab: also he went down and slew a lion in a pit in a snowy day.

"And he slew an Egyptian, a man of great stature, five cubits high; and in the Egyptian's hand was a spear like a weaver's beam."

Benaiah and Abishai were evidently men of aspirations, and so also were those "valiant men of the armies" whose names follow in the list. If their deeds differed from those of the "three mighties" it was rather in kind than in degree of prowess.

We have vaunted a "Big Four" in the history of our own country and their deeds differed from those of David's First Three in kind and degree also. For this was the story of the three mighty captains: —

"Now three of the thirty captains went down to the rock to David, into the cave of

Adullam; and the host of the Philistines encamped in the valley of Rephaim.

“ And David was then in the hold, and the Philistines’ garrison was then at Beth-lehem.

“ And David longed, and said, Oh that one would give me drink of the water of the well of Beth-lehem, that is at the gate!

“ And the three brake through the host of the Philistines, and drew water out of the well of Beth-lehem, that was by the gate, and brought it to David: but David would not drink of it, but poured it out to the Lord,

“ And said, My God forbid it me, that I should do this thing: shall I drink the blood of these men that have put their lives in jeopardy? for with the jeopardy of their lives they brought it. Therefore he would not drink it. These things did these three mightiest.”

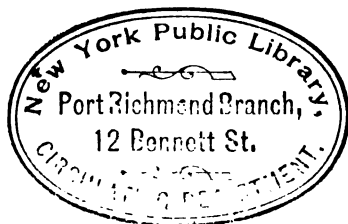
According to latter-day standards this episode was very foolishly managed. David was a king, and a rich man. He had flocks and herds, gold, silver, and jewels. He was perfectly well able to pay the three captains “ big money ” for risking their lives to gratify

his longings, and if, knowing the peril, they still chose to jeopardize themselves, that was their own affair. When the adventure was safely ended, the three captains could perhaps have retired on their earnings and purchased for themselves purple and fine linen and horses and chariots and the like, just as we moderns buy changes of raiment and automobiles and steam yachts with the blood money for which we put ourselves in jeopardy.

As for David, he could have enjoyed his cooling draught with a clear conscience. Why not, since he had made a business contract and "delivered the goods"? There was doubtless water to be had nearer at hand than that of the well of Beth-lehem, but if a man has an especial kind of thirst, he does have it; and having paid for its gratification, to waste the liquor is senseless deprivation.

It was the Puritan conscience, we are told, which "put rock foundations under this republic;" in the minds of some old-fashioned people the belief still obtains that courage and loyalty and self-control and self-sacrifice lie at the foundation of both national and

individual character, and that the nation or the individual who forsakes these ideals will, in spite of all the opportunities and training of schools and colleges and universities, remain radically uneducated.



The Riverside Press
Electrotyped and printed by H. O. Houghton & Co.
Cambridge, Mass., U. S. A.

The Riverside Press

*Electrotyped and printed by H. O. Houghton & Co.
Cambridge, Mass., U. S. A.*

